BUDDHISM

CRITICAL CONCEPTS
IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Edited by
PAUL WILLIAMS

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In these eight volumes we are reprinting some of the more significant papers in Buddhist Studies published in the last forty-five years or so. This period has seen a quite astonishing increase in academic interest in the field of Buddhist Studies, and scholars are beginning to construct quite a few paradigms for interpreting the doctrines and practices of Buddhism as it developed from India and spread into South and Southeast Asia, Central Asia, China, Korea, further East Asia, Japan and Tibet, and nowadays of course to the western world as well. Not only, for example, have Buddhist philosophical ideas been expressed and discussed with greater and greater sophistication – frequently now by scholars whose first training has been in western philosophy but who have also gained familiarity with one or more of the Asian languages required for primary source study – but other scholars have sought to understand how Buddhism is lived 'on the ground' in Buddhist cultures, often bringing together a fine training in classical languages and civilisations with anthropological awareness and field study. We are beginning to develop a much more refined idea of what Mahāyāna Buddhism is and how it might have originated in India, and the word 'Hīnayāna' is now treated with distinct caution. In the metastudy of Buddhism, scholars have become more and more aware of how not only the conclusions but also even the approaches and methodology of many earlier scholars reflected certain 'Orientalist' presuppositions about the nature of Buddhism. Nowadays the presentation of Buddhism as a pure, philosophical, set of tenets and practice best exemplified in the earliest texts and often misunderstood and corrupted by its later rather dim-witted and frankly superstitious (Asiatic) followers is likely to be seen for what it no doubt is – as a projection into cultural history of the Protestant presuppositions of so many nineteenth-century Western imperialists. That this view of traditional Buddhism is also held sometimes by certain modern Buddhists themselves ('Protestant Buddhists') is one of the dimensions of the study of Buddhism that recent scholarship has become aware of and sought to probe. On the other hand scholars are also beginning to realise that it is extremely problematic to try to abstract from modern or even ancient Buddhist practice in, say, China, Japan or Tibet to what may have been the case in ancient India. Balancing this, for at least the study of

late north Indian Buddhism recently scholars have begun to take much more interest in an area of the Buddhist world previously unjustifiably dismissed as corrupt and syncretistic, the Newari Buddhism of the Kathmandu valley. Newari Buddhism represents perhaps the longest unbroken continuity of Buddhism in the world, and the only area of the South Asian 'Indian' Buddhist world that would claim Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna aspiration and affiliation. It shows some arguably unique and initially unexpected features, such as its largely lay orientation and its willing involvement with caste features like the purity and pollution rules so familiar from the wider and dominant 'Hindu' society. What it might tell us about the development and form of late Buddhism in India is still a source of excited speculation.

Textual study during the last thirty years or so has widened enormously – there are many more Buddhist texts available now in reasonable editions and sometimes translations, and in recent years further ancient manuscript collections have become available, sometimes as a result of the turbulent political events of recent Asian history. Historical events, such as since 1959 the Tibetan diaspora, while terrible in themselves, have led to a far greater access to Buddhist sources, teachings, and practice than was previously available to us. Balancing this, on the other hand, has been the twentieth-century destruction of civilisations often moulded to a significant degree by Buddhism (including destruction of resources for scholarship) in countries like Vietnam and Cambodia – a destruction symbolised in a dramatic way recently, for example, in the demolition of the Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan.

So much has happened in Buddhist Studies during the last thirty years that, while there are still many fine academic studies of dimensions of Buddhism completed before, say, 1970, the more easily available older introductory works – works often frequently reprinted – should now be treated with distinct caution. They are only slowly being replaced by more reliable introductions that take into consideration the directions and conclusions of recent scholarship. And as is so often the case with scholarship, many of the most interesting and innovative discussions of our subject lie hidden away in journal collections that are normally available (if at all) only in libraries attached to large universities with a particular interest in Buddhist Studies.

The present set of volumes seeks to reprint some of the more significant papers in Buddhist Studies of recent years that are otherwise available in the overwhelming majority of cases only in journals. This is because it is journal collections, and of course back copies of specialist journals, that are likely to be most difficult to find and access for many students and interested general readers. Some of the important papers included here are extremely difficult to find even in university library collections. This applies in the English-speaking world particularly to papers written in French. How many libraries in, say, North America or the United Kingdom have easy access to the *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême Orient*, for example, or the journal *T'oung-pao?* I have tried to include in each volume an especial gem that is particularly important

and very difficult to get hold of. Thus readers will find here lengthy pieces such as André Bareau's 'La construction et le cult des stūpa d'après les *Vinayapiṭaka*', and Étienne Lamotte's 'Mañjuśrī', but also in English Akira Hirakawa's influential and nowadays highly controversial 'The rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism and its relationship to the worship of stūpas'.

It has been suggested to me that there is no need for a collection of this sort, since more and more articles are now available usually for free download by electronic means. I am not convinced. First, very few of the articles reprinted here are actually available that way, and there is no guarantee that all the others will be, or even that a significant proportion of them will ever become available in this way, let alone in the near future. Second, while those who are members of big European or North American universities may be able to access some of our papers electronically, free of charge because the (often renewable) charges are paid for by their universities, the ordinary interested reader who simply has a ticket to his or her local library, or someone in a part of the world less familiar with computers and the use of the Internet, or with a doubtful electricity supply, or wanting hardcopy but with no access to a printer, may not be quite so lucky. Anyway, old-fashioned it may be, but the days of the book, the beautifully smelling, silky-feeling, sensual book, are by no means over and the modern manichean rejection, fear even, of the tactile, public and material perhaps needs some sort of resistance.

The emphasis on reprinting journal articles here means that one of the principles for exclusion from this set is that an article will not normally be included if it is available in a book collection, including collected papers of individual scholars in book form. Thus the reader will find here no papers by several of the most distinguished scholars working in the field today. There are no pieces by Gregory Schopen or Padmanabh Jaini, for example. Both have recently published collections of their more significant papers. At the time of writing Schopen has a further volume still expected. There are nevertheless some individual exceptions to the rule of excluding articles available in book anthologies, where papers have seemed particularly important and the original book in which they were published is also out of print or difficult to find in many libraries. And the overwhelming majority of the papers published in the present collection have never been reprinted before. Thus it is hoped that the present eight-volume set will serve as an instant mini-article-library in Buddhist Studies for those educational institutions that do not have ready access to these journals and cannot afford the space or expense to acquire the journals even were the necessary back-issues easily available. The collection may also suggest, together with a judicial choice of set-texts and other key books such as reliable translations, one or more syllabuses for teaching Buddhist Studies right up to postgraduate level in universities and colleges. There is a tendency nowadays for an academic subject to be approached through the core text, completely neglecting journal collections unless they are put together in course-readers by individual tutors. The present set, easily available, might

(one can always hope) encourage more students and teachers to make use of journal papers.

The present papers are all in English and French, with of course the vast majority in English. Such reflects the intended readership of this collection. We may lament it but we simply do not find many students, or at least undergraduate students, working in Buddhist Studies in the United Kingdom or the United States who read happily modern European languages and use them regularly in their own academic writing. Nevertheless it should be clear that much of the most important work in Buddhist Studies has not been written in English. Not only is French crucially important, particularly although by no means exclusively for the study of Mahāyāna (one thinks of the vast output of Étienne Lamotte), but it is not possible to work at an advanced level in the field without access also to material written in German. I have not included any German material here, but I have included many articles written in English by important German scholars and also articles written originally in German (by, for example, Lambert Schmithausen) but published subsequently in English. I have as well sometimes reprinted pieces that serve primarily as surveys of material not published in English and otherwise inaccessible to those students who prefer to restrict themselves to material exclusively in English. While no one can really undertake advanced work in Buddhist Studies without some access to and cognisance of material in French and German, Italian is less important for Buddhist Studies. Nevertheless, although not represented here, one should not neglect to mention the many fine studies that have been published in Italian that may not be available in English versions, and the many very distinguished Italian scholars (such as Guiseppe Tucci) who have contributed so much to our field.

Here we are reprinting a *selection* of papers in Buddhist Studies. Selections inevitably require a selector, and eventually selectors turn out to involve units of consciousness. These are most often human beings! In other words, all selections are likely to involve an element of subjectivity. I am only too aware of my own fallibility. I cannot claim to be a specialist in all areas of Buddhism and Buddhist Studies. I have sought to make the present selection somewhat less subjective by trying to consult widely on articles to be included in the collection. Before beginning to assemble these papers I sent out messages on various Internet sites used by those interested in Buddhist Studies. I sent out other requests for advice to fellow scholars listed on e-mail lists that I had available. I wanted suggestions of papers to include in the present collection. Several scholars responded generously, as did others who came subsequently to know of what I was attempting to do. I was sent copies of papers difficult to obtain and unavailable here in Bristol. I am enormously grateful to all those who helped me, and I take great pleasure in noting their names at the end of this Introduction. But, to be frank, in the end not so many scholars and others interested in Buddhist Studies offered advice on papers to include here, so in the last analysis I was forced to make my own choice of papers, with occasional help

from my colleagues in Buddhist Studies here in Bristol and particular friends elsewhere who gave me advice on individual volumes related to their own expertise.

Some areas of our discipline (if discipline it is) are completely neglected here. For example, there is nothing directly on Buddhist art. I simply do not know enough to make a discerning collection of important journal articles on Buddhist art. Other people mentioned no convincing papers on Buddhist art to me. With a strict page limit imposed by Routledge, unfortunately some areas, and also some jolly good papers, have had to be omitted. Perhaps I can apologise here for those omissions. I am sorry. Any collection of this sort is likely to be criticised for its omissions as well as for choices for inclusion that some will consider to be quite mistaken. Frequent apologies on publication will no doubt become the order of the day. It would certainly have been possible to produce a completely different set of eight volumes, or (say) sixteen volumes. But this, under the circumstances, is the set I have produced – 'warts and all'.

Finally, the pleasure of expressing gratitude. First I'd like to thank all those authors who have generously agreed to allow me to reprint their papers. Their fine scholarship is so very much appreciated, and I hope they will be happy with seeing their articles reprinted here. I hope also that those great scholars who are no longer with us would be delighted to find their published work gaining a new lease of life in this form. At least one sort of reincarnation is manifestly possible. I would also like to thank the many editors of journals and other copyright holders who responded so promptly and readily to my requests for permission to reprint these pieces. In some cases, with some of the more popular academic journals in our field, I am sure I made myself something of a nuisance.

I am grateful for particular advice and help in putting these volumes together to my colleagues Rupert Gethin and Rita Langer, and to Tom Tillemans, Richard Payne, Frank Reynolds, Jake Carbine, Damien Keown, Todd Lewis, Richard Gombrich, Charles Prebish, Paul Harrison, Toshihiro Wada, Mitsuru Ando, Per Kvaerne, Ernst Steinkellner, Paul Swanson, Tadeusz Skorupski, Pascale Engelmajer, Ding-Hwa Hsieh, Andrew Huxley, Al Bloom and Hubert Durt. I also would like to thank the following, who all took time to respond to my original request for advice with articles to include in this collection, even though I have not always been able to follow their suggestions: Chris Beckwith, Georges Dreyfus, Jin Y. Park, Eugene Wang, James Benn, Naomi Appleton, Denise Leidy, John Holt, Charles Willemen, Duncan Ryuken Williams, Ian Reader, John Makransky, Mary Searle-Chatterjee, Richard King, Elizabeth Harris and William Bodiford.

If I have missed anyone out, once more my apologies. I have also tried very hard to contact the authors of all the pieces reprinted here, and of course the copyright holders. Sometimes, in a very few cases, in spite of repeated e-mails and letters I have still had no response. If those authors and copyright holders

would get in touch with me, either directly or through Routledge, I would be delighted to send them the appropriate request letters and arrange suitable terms and appropriate remuneration.

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LA CONSTRUCTION ET LE CULTE DES STŪPA D'APRÈS LES *VINAYAPIṬAKA*

André Bareau

Source: *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême Orient* 50, 2 (1960): 229–74.

Tous les *Vinayapiṭaka*, y compris ces abrégés (*mātṛkā*) que sont le *P'i-ni-mou king* et le *Pi-nai-ye*, à la seule exception du *Vinaya* pāli, contiennent d'intéressantes données concernant la construction et le culte des *stūpa*. Vu leur caractère canonique, elles constituent les plus anciens documents que nous possédions sur cette question, à l'exception de celles, assez peu importantes, qui sont contenues dans les diverses recensions du *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*.

Le fait qu'elles soient absentes du *Vinaya* pāli, qui est de beaucoup le plus connu et utilisé en Occident, explique qu'on les ait jusqu'ici négligées et même pratiquement ignorées. L'examen de ces données souvent obscures m'a été facilité grâce à l'aide que m'ont apportée M^{me} Benisti, qui a confronté longuement les résultats de ses recherches récentes dans le domaine de l'archéologie avec les documents que j'avais tirés des textes, et M. Jacques Gernet, qui m'a fourni des éclaircissements sur certaines phrases chinoises assez énigmatiques. Qu'ils veuillent bien trouver ici l'expression de ma vive gratitude.

Les données en question se présentent sous deux formes : des récits complets consacrés aux *stūpa* et des éléments plus ou moins brefs, généralement réduits à une phrase ou à quelques mots, dispersés dans le texte des *Vinayapiṭaka*. Les premiers ont souvent, en eux-mêmes, un intérêt légendaire et même historique que l'on ne saurait négliger, comme on le verra par la suite. Ces récits se trouvent dans le *Kṣudrakavastu* chez les Mahīśāsaka[1], les Dharmaguptaka[2], les Mahāsāṅghika[3] (pour autant que l'on puisse établir une répartition par chapitres des *Skandhaka* de ces derniers). On les rencontre, en partie, dans le *Kṣudrakavastu*[4] et en partie dans la *Nidānamātṛkā*[5] des Mūlasarvāstivādin. Chez les Sarvāstivādin[6], ils sont rangés dans les parties complémentaires, probablement rattachées tardivement au Canon : l'*Ekottaradharma* et un chapitre postérieur consacré aux devoirs des moines; un seul récit, très court, appartient au *Kṣudrakavastu*. Les données éparses sont absentes des ouvrages des Mahāsāṅghika,

des Mahīśāsaka et des Dharmaguptaka. Chez les Sarvāstivādin, elles sont rares et dispersées dans le *Kṣudrakavastu* et le *Śayanavastu*. Dans le *Vinaya* des Mūlasarvāstivādin, on les rencontre dans le *Kṣudrakavastu* et dans le résumé en vers nommé *Vinayakārikā*. L'abrégé de *Vinaya* anonyme (*Pi-nai-ye*)[7] ne contient qu'un seul récit, placé tout à la fin de l'ouvrage. Dans le *P'i-ni-mou king*[8] enfin, les récits et les éléments séparés sont dispersés à peu près dans tout le livre. Tout ceci, de même que l'absence de toute donnée dans le *Vinayapiṭaka* pāli, tend à prouver que ces documents n'ont été incorporés aux divers Canons qu'assez tard, dans les deux derniers siècles avant notre ère et même après dans certains cas. Cependant, certains indices laissent à penser que l'un au moins des récits, celui qui concerne le *stūpa* du Buddha Kāśyapa, peut remonter, dans sa version primitive, à une époque antérieure au règne d'Aśoka. Il semble donc qu'une partie au moins de nos documents et des anecdotes qui leur servent de cadre ait subsisté pendant un temps plus ou moins long en tant qu'éléments paracanoniques avant d'être introduite dans les *Vinayapiṭaka*. Rien ne s'oppose non plus à ce que des éléments semblables aient existé dans les écoles régies par le Canon pāli et que, n'ayant jamais été admis dans celui-ci, ils aient finalement disparu dans l'oubli. Du reste, l'existence même des *stūpa*, prouvée surabondamment par l'archéologie et l'épigraphie, au moins depuis le règne d'Aśoka qui fit agrandir du double celui du Buddha Konākamana comme l'atteste l'inscription de Nigali Sagar, suppose celle de règles contemporaines concernant la construction de ces édifices et le culte qu'on leur rendait.

Voici donc, classées et confrontées, les données que nous fournissent les *Vinayapiṭaka*.

A. Les raisons sur lesquelles repose l'édification des stūpa

Il faut distinguer d'abord les *stūpa* construits sur les restes d'un cadavre et ceux que l'on a élevés sur les reliques d'une personne vivante, notamment ses cheveux et ses rognures d'ongles.

Le premier cas semble le plus important et le plus ancien. Selon le *Pi-nai-ye:* « Quand un homme du commun meurt, on bat la terre pour faire un tumulus (墳). A plus forte raison, pour le Bienheureux » (T. 1464, p. 897 *c*-898 *a*). Le *P'i-ni-mou king* explique : « Sur les cadavres, on élève des *stūpa* (塔) » [T. 1463, p. 815 *c*] et il ajoute : « Les vêtements (ou : étoffes 衣) que l'on suspend au-dessus des *stūpa* ne doivent pas être pris ... Si, à l'intérieur du tertre, le cadavre n'est pas encore détruit, les vêtements qui sont sur le cadavre ne doivent pas être pris ». Ceci montre que, dans deux écoles au moins, on rattachait l'origine des *stūpa* aux tumuli édifiés sur les cadavres des gens ordinaires. Ce passage prouve aussi que, dans l'Inde ancienne, l'inhumation était assez courante[9], bien que les moines aient toujours été incinérés, le rite de l'incinération étant sans doute réservé, parce que plus onéreux, aux personnes particulièrement respectables. Enfin, il est permis de voir dans ces morceaux d'étoffe suspendus audessus des tertres funéraires ordinaires, et qui sont peut-être une partie des

vêtements des morts abandonnés comme impurs, l'origine des bannières que l'on suspend au-dessus des *stūpa* et aussi d'autres monuments religieux comme l'arbre de *bodhi* dans les monastères actuels.

Les *stūpa* renfermant des reliques de cheveux et d'ongles s'expliquent différemment. Dans un récit conservé par les Sarvāstivādin, le célèbre dévot laïc Anāthapiṇḍika dit au Buddha : « Ô Bienheureux, quand le Bienheureux voyage parmi les hommes pour les éduquer, j'éprouve toujours le désir de regarder avec respect le Buddha. Puisse le Bienheureux me donner de petits objets auxquels je puisse rendre un culte (*pūjā*) ». Le Buddha lui donne aussitôt des cheveux et des rognures d'ongles : « Tu leur rendras un culte ». S'adressant au Buddha, il [Anāthapiṇḍika] dit alors : « Ô Bienheureux, me permets-tu d'élever un *stūpa* (塔) pour ces cheveux et ces ongles? » Le Buddha dit : « Je te permets d'en élever » (T. 1435, p. 351 *c*). Ainsi donc, ces menus déchets provenant du corps du Buddha participent de sa nature et, en les vénérant, on vénère le Bienheureux lui-même. On trouve la même préoccupation dans un récit du *P'i-ni-mou king* : « Quand on coupa les cheveux [du Buddha], le fils de roi Gopāla se rendit auprès du Buddha et demanda au Bienheureux ces cheveux pour les emporter et, étant retourné dans son pays, leur rendre un culte. Le Buddha le lui permit aussitôt. Le fils de roi demanda alors des explications au Bienheureux : « Ces cheveux, dans quel récipient faut-il les mettre pour leur rendre un culte? » Le Buddha dit: « Il faut les mettre dans un récipient fait des sept joyaux pour leur rendre un culte » (T. 1463, p. 816 *c*).

La version dharmaguptaka de la même anecdote présente une variante intéressante : « Il y avait alors un fils de roi, Gopāli, qui dirigeait un corps d'armée et désirait aller dans la direction de l'Ouest où il y avait des rebelles à soumettre. Il vint pour chercher des cheveux et de la barbe du Bienheureux. Les moines le dirent au Buddha. Le Buddha dit : « Je permets qu'on les lui donne ». Les ayant obtenus, il ne sut pas en quel endroit les placer. Le Buddha dit : « Je permets qu'on les place dans un *stūpa* d'or, ou dans un *stūpa* d'argent . . . Alors, le fils de roi, ayant emporté les cheveux du Bienheureux, alla soumettre les rebelles et obtint la victoire » (T. 1428, p. 957 *b*). Nous voyons par cet exemple que le *stūpa*-reliquaire, de petites dimensions, servait aussi de talisman et de palladium. Si cet usage, que l'on retrouve dans toutes les religions, ne nous surprend guère, nous sommes cependant assez étonnés de voir un ouvrage canonique bouddhique, non seulement le relater, mais encore le sanctionner.

La suite du récit concernant le reliquaire confié au prince Gopāla ou Gopāli nous montre la liaison qui existait entre le *stūpa*-reliquaire et le *stūpa*-monument. Les Dharmaguptaka disent à ce propos : « Quand le fils de roi [après avoir remporté la victoire sur les rebelles] fut revenu dans son pays, il éleva un *stūpa* pour les cheveux du Bienheureux. C'est le *stūpa* [qui fut élevé] quand le Bienheureux était en ce monde ». Le *stūpa*-monument est donc une chapelle, dans laquelle on a déposé un *stūpa*-reliquaire. L'anecdote est un peu plus compliquée dans le *P'i-ni-mou king* : « Le fils de roi partit comme le Buddha l'avait enseigné et, en route, il apprit que des bandits d'un pays étranger arrivaient.

Aussitôt, sur la route, il fit un grand *stūpa* et rendit un culte aux cheveux du Buddha. Ce *stūpa* est nommé *stūpa* des cheveux du Buddha ». Le *stūpa*-monument sert donc ici à protéger le *stūpa*-reliquaire et le trésor qu'il représente, à la fois pour sa richesse et pour sa vertu magique, des atteintes des méchants.

Deux *Vinaya*, celui des Mahīśāsaka et celui des Mūlasarvāstivādin, nous apprennent que l'on construisait des *stūpa* pour les Buddha Tathāgata, pour les Pratyeka-buddha ou Buddha solitaires, pour les Auditeurs (*śrāvaka*), c'est-à-dire pour les quatre sortes de saints bouddhiques, et pour les Cakravartin, ces monarques universels qui font tourner la Roue de la Loi (*dharmacakra*) sur le monde entier (T. 1421, p. 173 *a*; T. 1451, p. 291 *c*; T. 1459, p. 652 *c*).

B. La construction du stūpa monument

Si les données concernant la construction du *stūpa* sont abondantes, elles ne sont pas toujours faciles à interpréter et, de plus, elles sont réparties dans les textes avec une hétérogénéité qui rend souvent difficiles à établir les comparaisons entre les diverses traditions. Ceci est d'autant plus regrettable que nos sources appartiennent à des écoles diverses et probablement aussi à des régions et à des époques différentes.

I. Les matériaux

Les matériaux les plus variés étaient employés à la construction des *stūpa*. Le plus vieux récit, celui du *stūpa* du Buddha Kāśyapa, contenu dans les *Vinaya* des Mahāsāṅghika, des Mahīśāsaka et des Dharmaguptaka, ne parle que de boue (泥) et comporte même cette stance : « Cent mille charges d'or pur ne sont pas comparables à une seule boule de boue utilisée pour construire le *stūpa* d'un Buddha » (T. 1421, p. 172 *c*-173 *a*; T. 1425, p. 497 *c*; T. 1428, p. 958 *b*). Les Dharmaguptaka précisent même de quelles espèces de boue il s'agit : de la boue noire (黑 泥), de la boue d'herbes desséchées, de la boue de bouse de vache, de la boue blanche (白 泥 = argile blanche), de la chaux, de la terre blanche (白 墠 土) [T. 1428, p. 956 *c*]. Les Sarvāstivādin parlent d'un mur de boue ou de mortier (塗 壁) [T. 1435, p. 351 *c*]. Tous ces matériaux semblent bien fragiles, bien inconsistants pour élever ces énormes tumuli que sont les *stūpa*. En admettant même que l'on ait pu en construire un tertre d'un certain volume, les pluies tropicales violentes de l'Inde n'auraient pas tardé à dissoudre et à anéantir ces monuments destinés, au contraire, à durer très longtemps pour perpétuer la mémoire de ceux dont ils abritaient les reliques. Ces matériaux légers pouvaient tout au plus servir à crépir la masse du *stūpa*, construite, elle, en matériaux beaucoup plus résistants.

Les Mahāsāṅghika, les Mūlasarvāstivādin et les Dharmaguptaka parlent du reste de l'utilisation des briques pour la fabrication des *stūpa*, et les derniers ajoutent à celles-ci la pierre et le bois (T. 1425, p. 497 *c*, 498 *a*; T. 1428, p. 956 *c*; T. 1451, p. 291 *c*). L'archéologie prouve, en effet, que la brique était le

matériau essentiel employé dans la construction des *stūpa*. Les grands *stūpa* d'Anurādhapura, à Ceylan, sont des montagnes de briques.

Nos textes parlent aussi de l'utilisation des métaux, surtout des métaux précieux, et des joyaux, dans l'édification des *stūpa*, et ce, non pas comme des éléments décoratifs, mais comme des matériaux de base. Les Mahāsāṅghika mentionnent un *stūpa*, celui du Buddha Kāśyapa, qui était fait des sept joyaux (T. 1425, p. 497 *b*). Les Mūlasarvāstivādin et le *Pi-nai-ye* prescrivent l'emploi des quatre joyaux, or, argent, cristal et lapis-lazuli (T. 1451, p. 249 *b* et 261 *c*; T. 1452, p. 429 *c*; T. 1464, p. 898 *a*). Selon les Mahīśāsaka, le *stūpa* de Kāśyapa était fait d'or et d'argent (T. 1421, p. 172 *c*). Enfin, les Mūlasarvāstivādin croyaient pouvoir utiliser le fer et le cuivre pour ce travail (T. 1452, p. 429 *c*). Il semble que l'imagination des Indiens antiques ait, sur ce point, assimilé les reliquaires aux monuments et rêvé d'énormes *stūpa* entièrement construits avec les matières précieuses qui servaient à la fabrication des urnes à reliques, travail d'orfèvre. Comme le suggèrent les Mahāsāṅghika, il n'est pas impossible que l'on ait recouvert certains monuments d'une mince couche d'or, comme cela se pratique encore aujourd'hui tant en ce qui concerne certains *stūpa* bouddhiques du Siam que les coupoles des sanctuaires centraux des grands temples hindouistes à Cidambaram, à Śrīraṅgam, etc. (T. 1425, p. 498 *a*).

II. La couleur

Nous savons peu de choses au sujet de la couleur de ces monuments, dont la masse de briques était généralement recouverte d'une sorte de stuc lui-même enduit d'une couche de matière colorée. Les Sarvāstivādin parlent d'un mortier rouge, noir et blanc (T. 1435, p. 351 *c*), les Mūlasarvāstivādin d'un enduit blanc frais (鮮 白) et de murs et de colonnes enduits (塗) de « pierre rouge » (赤 石) et de « minéral pourpre » (紫 礦) [T. 1452, p. 429 *b*].

III. Les proportions

Les dimensions données par nos sources sont toutes de l'ordre d'une lieue indienne (*yojana*), soit environ 10 kilomètres, ce qui est évidemment à rejeter comme purement légendaire. Cependant, ces dimensions extravagantes sont intéressantes en ce qu'elles nous donnent les proportions des monuments.

D'après les Mahāsāṅghika et les Mahīśāsaka, le *stūpa* idéal avait une demi-lieue de large et une lieue de haut, et était donc deux fois plus haut que large (T. 1421, p. 172 *c*; T. 1425, p. 497 *b*). Selon le *Pi-nai-ye*, il avait une lieue de large comme de long, et une lieue de haut (T. 1464, p. 898 *a*), c'est-à-dire qu'il était aussi large que haut. Enfin, pour les Mūlasarvāstivādin, le *stūpa* idéal avait les proportions du mont Sumeru, soit une lieue de large et une demi-lieue de haut, ou deux ou trois measures de large pour une ou deux de haut (T. 1451, p. 222 *c*, 249 *b*, 261 *c*, 291 *c*; T. 1459, p. 652 *c*).

Nous voyons donc que les proportions des *stūpa* variaient beaucoup avec les

écoles, peut-être aussi avec les régions. Cela contredit la légende rapportée par Hiuan-tsang selon laquelle les *stūpa* les plus anciens étaient ceux qui étaient le plus enfoncés dans le sol, ce qui laissait supposer que les proportions de ces monuments avaient évolué dans le sens d'une importance de plus en plus grande donnée à la hauteur par rapport à la largeur. En effet, le *Vinaya* des Mūlasarvāstivādin, qui décrit les *stūpa* les plus aplatis, les plus anciens par conséquent si l'on se réfère aux dires de Hiuan-tsang, est de beaucoup le plus récent de tous les recueils disciplinaires, alors que le récit dans lequel figurent les données des Mahāsāṅghika et des Mahīśāsaka est probablement le plus ancien, et semble remonter au moins au règne d'Aśoka. On pourrait expliquer ces divergences si grandes en supposant que le calcul n'est pas basé sur les mêmes éléments dans les divers cas, par exemple que celui des Mūlasarvāstivādin ne concerne que la masse ronde (*aṇḍa*) qui forme la partie la plus importante du monument, tandis que celui des Mahāsāṅghika et des Mahīśāsaka est relatif à la hauteur du *stūpa* depuis le sol naturel jusqu'à l'extrémité du mât portant les parasols. En fait, rien n'indique nulle part sur quelles bases reposent ces calculs, et par conséquent, en l'absence de telles précisions, il semble bien que ceux-ci concernent la hauteur totale du *stūpa*, du sol naturel à la pointe du mât, et la largeur du soubassement.

IV. Le terrain

Certains textes nous donnent quelques renseignements concernant le terrain sur lequel doit être bâti le *stūpa*. Selon les Mūlasarvāstivādin, il doit se trouver au carrefour de quatre grandes routes (T. 1451, p. 394 *c*, 400 *b–c*).

Les Mahīśāsaka énumèrent les *stūpa* en plein air, les *stūpa* construits dans des habitations (屋) et les *stūpa* dépourvus de murs (無 壁) [T. 1421, p. 173 *a*). Si les deux premières sortes ne font pas de difficulté, la dernière demeure énigmatique.

Les Sarvāstivādin nous donnent heureusement plus de détails. On peut, d'après eux, construire un *stūpa* dans une caverne (窟) aménagée de main d'homme et pourvue d'une porte, et le recouvrir (覆) [T. 1435, p. 351 *c*-352 *a*]. On peut en édifier dans des jardins (園 田) ou dans des champs de céréales (穀 田) [T. 1435, p. 415 *c*]. Il faut choisir soigneusement un terrain où l'on puisse aller et venir sans difficulté, qui soit pourvu d'eau et de bouquets d'arbres, qui soit paisible jour et nuit, où il y ait peu de moustiques, de vent, de chaleur et d'insectes venimeux (T. 1435, p. 416 *c*).

Les Mahāsāṅghika nous donnent d'autres renseignements. Selon eux, avant de bâtir un monastère, on doit d'abord déterminer un bon terrain pour en faire l'emplacement du *stūpa*. Celui-ci ne doit être situé ni au Sud ni à l'Ouest du monastère, mais à l'Est ou au Nord (T. 1425, p. 498 *a*). L'archéologie révèle qu'en fait, par exemple à Nāgārjunīkoṇḍa ou à Anurādhapura, les *stūpa* sont généralement placés à l'Ouest, direction du soleil couchant, des morts, par rapport aux monastères. La tradition veut du reste qu'au moment du Parinirvāṇa,

le Buddha ait fait face à l'Ouest. Or, le *stūpa* symbolise le Parinirvāṇa. Les Mahāsāṅghika nous disent encore que le terrain du Buddha, c'est-à-dire du *stūpa*, ne doit pas empiéter sur le terrain de la communauté (*saṅgha*), c'est-à-dire du monastère et réciproquement. L'eau du terrain du Saṅgha ne doit pas entrer sur le terrain du Buddha et réciproquement. Le *stūpa* doit être construit en un lieu élevé et bien visible (T. 1425, p. 498 *a*).

V. Les éléments architectoniques

Sauf chez les Mahāsāṅghika et les Mūlasarvāstivādin, nous ne possédons pas de description complète, même fort sommaire, du *stūpa*. Généralement, les données concernant les éléments architectoniques, dont la liste est presque toujours partielle, sont dispersées sans ordre.

Avant d'examiner séparément chacun de ces éléments, voyons les deux descriptions qui nous sont fournies. Selon les Mahāsāṅghika : « Le soubassement est entouré, des quatre côtés, par une barrière. Sur la partie ronde s'élèvent deux épaisseurs (二 重) d'où des dents carrées (方 牙) sortent des quatre côtés. Audessus, on place les parasols à plateaux (槃 蓋), un grand mât-signal (長 表) et les signes de roues (輪 相) » [T. 1425, p. 497 *c* et 498 *a*]. Voici la description des Mūlasarvāstivādin : « Vous pouvez utiliser deux épaisseurs de briques pour faire le soubassement. Ensuite, placez le corps du *stūpa* (塔 身) et, au-dessus, placez le bol retourné (覆 鉢). A volonté, réduisez sa hauteur et établissez son sommet horizontal . . . Dressez le mât à roues (輪 竿), puis placez-y les signes de roues. Le nombre de ces signes de roues est de un, deux, trois, quatre, jusqu'à treize. Puis, placez l'urne de joyaux (寶 瓶) » [T. 1451, p. 291 *c*].

Voyons maintenant les éléments, un par un.

1° *Le soubassement.* — Les Dharmaguptaka prescrivent de construire le *stūpa* carré, circulaire ou octogonal (T. 1428, p. 956 *c*), mais il semble bien que cela se rapporte plus précisément au soubassement du monument. Les Mahāsāṅghika parlent des quatre côtés (四 方) du soubassement (T. 1425, p. 497 *c* et 498 *a*) et les Mūlasarvāstivādin des quatre bords (四 畔) [T. 1459, p. 652 *c*], ce qui laisse supposer que la forme en était carrée. A un autre endroit, les seconds donnent la mesure de la circonférence (周 圓) d'un *stūpa*, que l'on doit comprendre du reste comme le diamètre, mais qui suggère une forme circulaire (T. 1451, p. 222 *c*).

2° *La partie ronde.* — C'est la partie essentielle du monument, « l'œuf » (*aṇḍa*). Seuls, les Mahāsāṅghika et les Mūlasarvāstivādin en parlent. Les premiers la mentionnent d'un seul mot, « la partie ronde » (圓) [T. 1425, p. 497 *c* et 498 *a*], les seconds l'appellent le « bol retourné » (覆 鉢) et le distinguent du « corps du *stūpa* » (塔 身) sur lequel il est placé. Ce dernier élément doit être la partie intérieure qui contient la chambre aux reliques. Le sommet du « bol retourné » est horizontal (平 頭) [T. 1451, p. 291 *c*] et désigné ailleurs comme « sommet en terrasse » (臺 頂) [T. 1452, p. 429 *c*].

3° *Le pavillon sommital.* — Ce pavillon (*harmikā*) placé au sommet de la masse ronde du *stūpa* n'est mentionné, et de façon assez énigmatique, que par les Mahāsāṅghika et les Sarvāstivādin. Pour les premiers, c'est « une double épaisseur (二 重) d'où des dents carrées (方 牙) sortent des quatre côtés » (T. 1425, p. 497 *c* et 498 *a*). Les seconds parlent d'une « terrasse circulaire (圓 堂) . . . sur laquelle on peut placer des arbres (木) pour y suspendre des bannières » (T. 1435, p. 352 *a*) et, parmi les objets servant à orner le *stūpa*, « des terrasses élevées (高 堂), des tours élevées (高 樓), des pavillons à deux étages (重 閣) où l'on suspend des clochettes de joyaux, des colliers à l'aspect brillant, des bannières de soie, des parasols fleuris . . . » (T. 1435, p. 415 *c*). Notons que le caractère 堂, que nous traduisons ici par « terrasse », rend exactement le sanskrit *prāsāda* et a, comme ce dernier terme, les sens de « terrasse, vaste bâtiment de réunion, hall, temple, palais, tour, etc. ». Ce manque de précision est d'autant plus gênant pour nous que les éléments énumérés ci-dessus par les Sarvāstivādin ne sont nullement localisés par rapport aux autres parties du *stūpa*. Seule, la comparaison avec les documents archéologiques nous permet de les placer au sommet de la masse arrondie du monument.

4° *Le mât aux parasols.* — Il est désigné par les Mahāsāṅghika sous le nom de « grand mât-signal » (長 表) [T. 1425, p. 497 *c* et 498 *a*] et par les Mūlasarvāstivādin sous celui de « mât à roues » (輪 竿) [T. 1451, p. 291 *c*].

5° *Les parasols et les signes de roues.* — La plupart des textes mentionnent les parasols sans les localiser, aussi les examinerons-nous plus loin. Certains d'entre eux les placent cependant au sommet du *stūpa*. Ainsi, les Mahāsāṅghika parlent des plateaux en forme de parasols (槃 蓋), du long mât-signal et des signes de roues (輪 相) situés au-dessus du pavillon (T. 1425, p. 497 *c* et 498 *a*). Les Mahīśāsaka mentionnent les « plateaux pour recevoir la rosée » (承 露 盤) [T. 1421, p. 173 *a*] et le *Pi-nai-ye* également, mais celui-ci donne une translittération *tcha-ti-li*, du nom sanskrit qui est *chattrikā*, c'est-à-dire « parasol », terme qui précède ici la traduction : « parasol en forme de plateau pour recevoir la rosée » (T. 1464, p. 898 *a*). La translittération permet de distinguer ces parasols du vase destiné à recevoir la pluie (*varṣasthāla*) placé tout au sommet du mât.

Les Mahāsāṅghika et les Mūlasarvāstivādin sont les seuls à parler des « signes de roues », encore les premiers ne font-ils que les citer. Les seconds, au contraire, nous donnent à leur propos d'utiles renseignements : « On dresse le mât à roues, puis on y place les signes de roues. Le nombre de ces signes de roues est de un, deux, trois, quatre, jusqu'à treize . . . Si c'est pour un Arhant, les signes de roue seront au nombre de quatre; pour un Anāgāmin jusqu'à trois; pour un Sakṛdāgāmin, il en faut deux; pour un Srotaāpanna, il en faut un; pour un simple homme de bien (*satpuruṣa*) ordinaire (*pṛthagjana*), sur le sommet horizontal, il ne peut y avoir de parasol à roue (輪 蓋) » [T. 1451, p. 291 *c*]. Et plus loin : « . . . les roues (輪) [sont] au nombre de un, deux, trois ou quatre selon

le Fruit (*phala*), il faut le savoir. Pour les hommes vertueux ordinaires, le sommet est plat (兀頭) comme pour un *caitya* (制底). Si l'on construit un *caitya* pour le Buddha, les parasols à roue sont en nombre indéterminé et dépassent mille s'il est très élevé, pour obtenir du mérite jusqu'à l'infini. Pour un Pratyekabuddha, semblable à un rhinocéros, on ne dépasse pas trente plateaux (槃) » [T. 1459, p. 652 *c*]. Ce dernier texte, qui rapporte des nombres exagérés, est probablement plus tardif que le précédent, qui signale encore, à un autre endroit, des miroirs (明鏡) attachés aux signes de roue (T. 1451, p. 326 *c*).

6° *L'urne de joyaux.* — Les Mūlasarvāstivādin, et peut-être aussi le *Pi-nai-ye*, sont seuls à la mentionner. Selon les premiers, elle est placée au sommet du mât à roues, et n'existe que dans les *stūpa* consacrés aux Buddha Tathāgata, non dans ceux qui sont dédiés aux Pratyeka-buddha et aux Śrāvaka (T. 1451, p. 291 *c*). Cette urne de joyaux (寶瓶) doit être placée sans être jointe (不合置) [T. 1459, p. 652 *c*].

Le *Pi-nai-ye*, après avoir mentionné les *chattrikā*, comporte une phrase que l'on ne sait trop comment interpréter : 去案蹂一拘恕, que suit la note explicative suivante : « Un cri [portant à] huit mille pieds et quatre lieues (*yojana*) » [T. 1464, p. 898 *a*]. La note se rapporte manifestement aux deux derniers caractères, *kiu-chou*, qui représenteraient alors une translittération du terme sanskrit *krośa*, ce qui est assez surprenant dans la description d'un *stūpa*. Si l'on ne tient pas compte de cette note, visiblement interpolée comme le montre clairement l'édition de Taishō Issaikyō, on peut rendre beaucoup mieux *kiu-chou* par *kośa* « étui, fourreau, boîte, caisse, magasin, trésor ». Ce *kiu-chou* = *kośa* serait notre « urne à joyaux » dont le nom sankrit pourrait être, plus complètement, *ratnakośa*. Les quatre premiers caractères, *k'iu-ngan-nai-yi*, peuvent rendre un terme indien, sanskrit ou plutôt prākrit, tel que **guhanayī*, dérivé de la racine GUH « cacher », et qui compléterait le sens de *kośa* : il s'agirait d'une urne dans laquelle seraient cachés des joyaux; ou bien faut-il distinguer l'urne (*kośa*) de la cachette (**guhanayī*) qui peut, alors, renfermer les reliques? Tout cela demeure bien conjectural, il faut l'avouer.

7° *La barrière.* — Cette barrière (欄楯), balustrade ou palissade, entoure complètement le soubassement du *stūpa* des Mahāsāṅghika (T. 1425, p. 497 *c* et 498 *a*). Les Mahīśāsaka nous disent seulement qu'elle est placée à l'extérieur (於外) du monument, ce dont nous aurions pu nous douter (T. 1421, p. 173 *a*). D'après les Dharmaguptaka, elle est placée sur les quatre côtés (T. 1428, p. 956 *c*). Selon les Sarvāstivādin, on la place devant les portes (戶前) du *stūpa* et tout autour (周匝) [T. 1435, p. 351 *c*], ce qui fait penser aux portes à chicane du grand *stūpa* de Sāñchī, par exemple.

La principale fonction de cette barrière est d'empêcher les animaux, vaches, moutons, chevaux, chiens, antilopes, de pénétrer sur le terrain du *stūpa* et de le souiller. Tel est l'avis des Dharmaguptaka, des Sarvāstivādin et des Mahāsāṅghika, ces derniers accusant les chiens d'apporter des morceaux de

cadavres, objets particulièrement impurs, pris sur un charnier voisin (T. 1425, p. 498 *a*; T. 1428, p. 956 *c* et 957 *c*; T. 1435, p. 351 *c*). Notons que les vaches sont citées comme cause de souillure à la fois par les Dharmaguptaka et les Sarvāstivādin. Les premiers mentionnent encore un usage de la barrière : on peut déposer des fleurs et des parfums sur le dessus (T. 1428, p. 956 *c*), ce qui laisse supposer que le dessus était plat, horizontal et assez large.

Les Dharmaguptaka et les Mahāsāṅghika semblent distinguer de la barrière le mur (牆障, 垣牆), qui sert plus particulièrement à empêcher l'intrusion des animaux impurs sur le terrain du *stūpa* (T. 1428, p. 956 *c*; T. 1425, p. 498 *a*). On peut supposer que ce mur doublait, dans ce cas, la barrière à l'extérieur.

Les Dharmaguptaka sont les seuls à mentionner les portes pratiquées dans cette clôture, mur ou barrière, mais l'existence de celles-ci est évidente, et amplement attestée par les documents archéologiques. Les Sarvāstivādin nous parlent, comme nous l'avons vu plus haut, des portes du *stūpa*, qui sont des portes pourvues de battants (扇) destinés à empêcher l'intrusion des animaux, et dont l'existence précède celle de la barrière. Ce détail laisse supposer que le monument auquel ils se réfèrent était creux, au moins en partie, ce qui semble contredit par les données de l'archéologie. Peut-être s'agissait-il seulement des niches du *stūpa*.

8° *La couverture.* — Deux textes mentionnent une couverture, celui des Mahāsāṅghika et celui des Mūlasarvāstivādin. Le premier déclare : « Alors, il y eut un ministre qui, s'adressant au roi, lui dit : « Dans l'avenir, il y aura des hommes « impies (非 法, *adharma*) qui apparaîtront. Ils briseront ce *stūpa*, commettant « une faute grave. Que le roi veuille seulement, avec des briques (以 塼), faire « une couverture (覆 上) d'or et d'argent. S'ils prennent l'or et l'argent, le *stūpa* « demeurera intact (在 得 全) ». Conformément aux paroles du ministre, le roi fit aussitôt faire, avec des briques, une mince (薄) couverture d'or, haute d'une lieue (*yojana*), large d'une demi-lieue et fit faire une barrière de cuivre » (T. 1425, p. 497 *c*-498 *a*).

D'après les Mūlasarvāstivādin : « Sur le *stūpa*, les oiseaux s'arrêtaient, et leurs immondices le souillaient. On désira élever au-dessus de lui une habitation pour le couvrir (覆 舍). Le Buddha dit : 'Vous pouvez la construire'. Alors, étant sans porte, cette maison (室) était désavantagée par l'obscurité. Le Buddha dit : « Selon votre volonté, ouvrez des portes » (T. 1452, p. 429 *c*).

Bien que la fonction de cette couverture soit la même dans les deux cas, à savoir protéger le *stūpa*, on peut se demander s'il ne s'agit pas de constructions très différentes. Dans le premier cas, celui des Mahāsāṅghika, l'utilisation de la brique suggère d'une certaine façon un ouvrage plein, sans solution de continuité avec le *stūpa*, et l'on pense au monument du Buddha Konākamana qu'Aśoka agrandit du double. Seul, l'emploi massif de la brique pouvait en effet décourager les efforts des impies à la recherche des trésors contenus dans la chambre aux reliques. Dans le second cas, au contraire, il s'agit d'une mince couverture, suffisante pour épargner au *stūpa* les souillures des oiseaux. C'est

exactement cette construction que le professeur Paranavitana a reconstituée d'après certains éléments de plusieurs vieux *stūpa* de Ceylan, notamment ces rangées de colonnes qui entouraient des monuments comme le Thūpārāma d' Anurādhapura, l'Ambatthala de Mihintale et le Vata da Ge de Polonnaruwam, et dont une maquettee à échelle réduite est présentée au petit musée d'Anurādhapura. La nécessité d'ouvrir des portes pour combattre l'obscurité régnant à l'intérieur montre que le pourtour était en colison pleine et non en péristyle, du moins pour le *stūpa* décrit par les Mūlasarvāstivādin. Nous avons dit plus haut. (B, 1, *in fine*) ce qu'il faut penser de la couverture mince en or signalée par les Mahāsāṅghika.

9° *Les niches.* — Ce sont les Mahāsāṅghika qui nous donnet le plus de renseignements sur les niches (龕) : « Dans le temps passé, après le Parinirvāṇa du Buddha Kāśyapa, le roi Kṛkin fit élever un *stūpa* pour ce Buddha et construire des niches sur les quatre côtés. Au-dessus, il fit exécuter toutes sortes de splendides peintures (彩 畫) de lions et d'éléphants. Devant, il fit faire une barrière avec des endroits pour déposer des fleurs. A l'intérieur des niches, il fit suspendre des parasols et des bannières de soie » (T. 1425, p. 498 *a*). Les Mahīśāsaka mentionnent des figures (像 *pratirūpa*), sans doute des statues, dans des niches situées *à* l'intérieur du *stūpa* (於 內), c'est-à-dire incorporées à la masse même du monument (T. 1421, p. 173 *a*). Quant aux Sarvāstivādin, ils nomment les niches sans donner le moindre détail à leur sujet (T. 1435, p. 415 *c*).

10° *Les édicules à offrandes.* — On peut rapprocher de ces niches certains édicules dont parlent les Dharmaguptaka, les Sarvāstivādin et les Mūlasarvāstivādin. Voici ce que disent les premiers : « Ils montèrent sur les statues et placèrent dessus les offrandes. Le Buddha dit : « Il ne faut pas agir ainsi. Il faut fabriquer d'autres moyens (方 便, *upāya*) pour monter (蹬) [variante : 登 banc, escabeau, gradin] et les déposer ». Sur le sol en plein air du *stūpa*, les offrandes de fleurs, de parfums, de lampes à huile, de bannières, de parasols, de musique et de chant étaient toutes [exposées] à l'humidité de la pluie, au souffle du vent, aux rayons du soleil, à la poussière du sol et aux immondices des corbeaux. Le Buddha dit : « Je prescris que l'on construise toutes sortes de maisons-abris » (屋 覆) [T 1428, p. 956 *c*].

D'après les Sarvāstivādin : « Il y avait des gens qui [désiraient] construire un toit (蓋) pour les offrandes, mais il n'y avait pas d'endroit où placer ce toit. Le Buddha dit : « Il faut le placer sur des poteaux à chevilles (釘 橛) », T. 1435, p. 351*c*). Uu peu plus loin, ils mentionnent des objets (物) et des endroits (處) où l'on doit déposer les fleurs et les lampes (T. 1435, p. 351 *c* et 352 *a*).

Voici le récit des Mūlasarvāstivādin : « Puisse le Bienheureux . . . me permettre en cet endroit, [sur le *stūpa*], de disposer en files des offrandes de lampes allumées ». Le Buddha dit : « Fais entièrement selon ta volonté ». Le maître de maison (*gṛhapati*) plaça les lampes sur les degrés (級), mais l'huile [coula]

par-dessous et salit le *stūpa*. Le Buddha dit : « On peut disposer les files de lampes allumées sous les degrés ». Il y eut des chiens qui burent l'huile tombant des récipients à l'huile. Le maître de maison dit au Buddha : « Je demande à faire un arbre à lampes (燈樹) ». Le Buddha dit : « Fais selon ta volonté ». Des vaches vinrent qui le brisèrent avec leurs cornes. Le maître de maison dit au Buddha : « Je demande à faire un support pour les lampes (燈架) ». Le Buddha dit : « Il faut le faire ». Sur les quatre faces, on plaça des lampes, mais elles n'étaient pas visibles. Le maître de maison dit au Buddha : « Je demande à faire un haut rebord saillant de toit (高簷) ». Le Buddha dit : « Fais selon ta volonté » (T. 1452, p. 429 *b*).

Quelques lignes plus loin, on nous reparle de cette maison à rebord saillant de toit (簷屋) construite en pierre rouge (赤石).

Nous avons ici une collection de moyens destinés à mettre les offrandes à l'abri des intempéries et des souillures et déprédations causées par les animaux. Nous avons d'autant plus de raisons de penser que toutes ces solutions furent utilisées qu'on les voit encore appliquées de nos jours dans les temples bouddhiques : toitures édifiées au-dessus des tables d'offrandes; rangées de lampes alignées sur les parties basses des *stūpa*; arbres à lampes, en métal, de la hauteur d'un homme, tendant leurs bras horizontaux terminés par des lampes en forme de feuille de pipal; supports pour les lampes et les fleurs, de diverses sortes, dont la forme la plus courante est la simple table à offrandes. Seul, le haut rebord saillant de toit semble aujourd'hui inutilisé, du moins à ma connaissance.

VI. Les éléments secondaires

Aux éléments précédents, qui font corps avec le *stūpa* et sont généralement présents, il faut en ajouter d'autres, moins fréquents ou plus indépendants du monument.

1° *Les poteaux et colonnes.* — Seuls, les Mahāsāṅghika ne nous en parlent pas. Les Mahīśāsaka disent : « Ils désiraient construire devant le *stūpa* des piliers (柱) de bois, de pierre, de fer et de cuivre et exécuter au-dessus des images (形) d'éléphants, de lions et de toutes sortes de quadrupèdes » (T. 1421, p. 173 *a*). Les Dharmaguptaka font une simple allusion à des poteaux (杙) dont certains sont en « dent de dragon » (龍牙), *nāgadanta*, c'est-à-dire en ivoire (T. 1428, p. 956 *c*). Les Mūlasarvāstivādin sont aussi brefs : « Le Buddha dit : « Il ne faut pas monter sur le *stūpa* et y fixer des chevilles pointues qui le percent. Si l'on commet cette transgression, on obtient une faute, on accomplit un péché. Mais, quand on commence à construire un *stūpa*, il faut faire sortir des pieux latéraux (傍橛, ou : obliques) pour faire des poteaux (杙) en dent d'éléphant » (T. 1452, p. 429 *c*). Les Sarvāstivādin mentionnent des pieux courbés (曲橛) pour mettre des fleurs (T. 1435, p. 351 *c*) et, plus loin, un pilier qui représente un élément fort important : « Le Buddha me permet-il de construire devant le *stūpa* une cible élevée (高 —) et d'y placer un lion? Le juge-t-il bon? ». le Buddha dit :

« Je permets qu'on la construise. — Le Buddha permet-il de construire une barrière des quatre côtés du lion? Le juge-t-il bon? » Le Buddha dit : « Je permets qu'on la construise. — Le Buddha permet-il de construire le lion en cuivre? Le juge-t-il bon? ». On rapporta cette affaire au Buddha. Le Buddha dit : « Je permets qu'on le fasse. — Le Buddha permet-il d'attacher des bannières au-dessus du lion de cuivre? Le juge-t-il bon? » On rapporta cette affaire au Buddha. Le Buddha dit : « Je permets qu'on les attache » (T. 1435, p. 352 *a*). Nous avons là une description de ces piliers qui avoisinaient les *stūpa* et dont le chapiteau supportait une statue d'animal, souvent de lion. On en a retrouvé divers exemplaires, dont le plus célèbre est le fameux chapiteau aux lions érigé à Sārnāth par l'empereur Aśoka. Tels sont également, quoique décrits avec moins de détail, les piliers mentionnés plus haut par les Mahīśāsaka. Quant aux pieux courbés signalés par les Sarvāstivādin, on les rencontre sur certains bas-reliefs.

Les parasols et les bannières, étant des éléments amovibles, seront examinés avec les objets du culte.

2° *Les jardins et bosquets.* — Les Mahāsāṅghika sont seuls à nous parler des jardins (園) des *stūpa* : « Après le Parinirvāṇa du Buddha Kāśyapa, le roi édifia un *stūpa* et, sur les quatre faces du *stūpa*, il fit faire toutes sortes de jardins et de bois (林). Dans les jardins et les bois du *stūpa*, il fit planter des arbres *āmra* (manguiers), des arbres *jambu* (jambousiers), des arbres *vaṃsa* (bambous), des arbres *campaka* (gingembres), des arbres *atimuktaka* (liane du manguier), des arbres *sumanā* (sorte de jasmin), des arbres « à fleurs de dragon » (*nāgapuṣpa*, plantes diverses), des arbres « sans-chagrin » (*aśoka*), des fleurs de toutes saisons. Les fleurs qui y poussent, il faut en faire l'offrande au *stūpa* » (T. 1425, p. 498 *a–b*).

3° *Les étangs.* — Seuls également, les Mahāsāġhika nous donnent quelques renseignements sur les étangs (池) des *stūpa* : « Après le Parinirvāṇa du Buddha Kāśyapa, le roi Kṛkin construisit des étangs sur les quatre faces du *stūpa* du Buddha Kāśyapa. Il y fit semer des fleurs *d'utpala* (lotus bleu), des fleurs de *padma* (lotus rouge), des *kumuda* (nénufars blancs), des *puṇḍarīka* (lotus blanc) et toutes sortes de fleurs mélangées. Maintenant, le roi aussi peut construire des étangs. Règles concernant les étangs : on peut construire des étangs sur les quatre faces d'un *stūpa*; les fleurs mélangées de toutes sortes qui sont dans les étangs servent d'offrandes au *stūpa* du Buddha » (T. 1425, p. 498 *b*).

Ainsi, les jardins, les bois et les étangs qui entourent le *stūpa* sont destinés, non seulement à embellir celui-ci, mais encore et surtout à approvisionner en fleurs diverses et choisies le culte qui lui est rendu.

4° *Les caitya.* — Nous ne traiterons ici des *caitya* que dans la mesure où ceux-ci sont en relations directes avec les *stūpa*.

Les Mahāsāṅghika consacrent tout un paragraphe à ces sanctuaires : « Après le Parinirvāṇa du Buddha Kāśyapa, le roi Kṛkin érigea, sur les quatre faces du

stūpa du Buddha Kāśyapa, des *caitya* (枝提) de joyaux. Il fit sculpter (彫) des ornements (文) et ciseler (刻) dans l'acier (鏤) toutes sortes de dessins (畫) splendides. Maintenant, le roi aussi peut construire des *caitya*. S'il y a des reliques (舍利, *śarīra*), on le nomme *stūpa*. S'il n'y a pas de reliques, on le nomme *caitya*. Comme à l'endroit (處) où le Buddha est né, à l'endroit où il a obtenu la Voie, à l'endroit où il a fait tourner la Roue de la Loi, à l'endroit du Parinirvāṇa, il y a des figures (像, *pratirūpa*, statues?) de Bodhisattva, des cavernes (窟, *guhā*) de Pratyekabuddha, des empreintes de pied (脚跡, *padasthāna*) de Buddha. Dans ces *caitya*, on peut déposer, pour le Buddha, des offrandes de fleurs et de parasols » (T. 1425, p. 498 *b*).

Les renseignements fournis par les Mūlasarvāstivādin sont plus brefs et dispersés : « . . . le sommet est plat (兀) comme pour un *caitya*. Si l'on construit un *caitya* pour le Buddha les parasols à roue sont en nombre indéterminé et dépassent mille s'il est très élevé, pour obtenir du mérite jusqu'à l'infini. Pour un Pratyekabuddha, semblable à un rhinocéros, on ne dépasse pas trente plateaux. Au sommet de ces signes de roues, l'urne de joyaux est placée sans être jointe. Dans le *caitya*, on place le Buddha et, des deux côtés, deux disciples, le reste des saints à la suite, en file, les profanes devant rester dehors » (T. 1459, p. 652 *c*). Un autre texte parle des quatre grands *caitya* situés à l'endroit (處) de la naissance, à l'endroit où le Bienheureux est devenu Buddha, à l'endroit où il fit tourner la Roue de la Loi et à l'endroit du Parinirvāṇa, et où se rend (往), grâce à sa puissance surnaturelle, le révérend Mahākāśyapa (T. 1451, p. 408 *c*). Les phrases qui précèdent et qui suivent ce passage parlent d'un voyage « aux lieux où se trouvent les reliques du corps du Buddha » et « aux lieux des *stūpa* où sont réunies les autres reliques ». Il semble donc que les Mūlasarvāstivādin distinguent mal les *caitya* des *stūpa*. En tout cas, pour eux comme pour les Mahāsāṅghika, ces deux sortes de monuments ont exactement la même forme et les mêmes dimensions, et de plus les quatre grands *caitya* sont situés à Lumbinī, à Bodh-Gayā, à Sārnāth et à Kuśinagara. On aurait pu penser que, chez les Mahāsāṅghika au moins, il ne s'agissait pas de localisation des grands *caitya*, mais de représentations en bas-relief des quatre événements majeurs de la vie du Buddha figurés sur les *caitya* entourant le *stūpa*. Cette interprétation était du reste suggérée par certains, documents archéologiques. Cependant, le texte des Mūlasarvāstivādin est sans équivoque aucune : il s'agit bien de sanctuaires situés sur l'emplacement de ces quatre événements majeurs et qui sont les principaux centres bouddhiques de pèlerinage. Il n'y a donc aucune raison de douter qu'il en soit de même dans le *Vinaya* des Mahāsāṅghika.

Les deux textes, qui appartiennent à des traditions très différentes, se complètent et se confirment mutuellement sur d'autres points encore, secondaires mais intéressants, à savoir les objets qui ornent le *caitya*. Les Mahāsāṅghika représentent les Bodhisattva par leur image, sans doute sculptée en bas-relief ou en ronde bosse, mais symbolisent les Pratyekabuddha par la caverne où ces solitaires vivent, retirés du monde, sans prêcher, et les Buddha par les empreintes de leurs pieds. Ceci nous ramène à l'époque lointaine, antérieure à notre ère, où l'on

n'osait pas représenter le corps du Buddha. Au contraire, les Mūlasarvāstivādin, dont le texte est beaucoup plus tardif, figurent le Buddha entre deux disciples principaux, les autres moines un peu plus loin, exactement comme cela se fait encore couramment, dans les temples bouddhiques de Ceylan par exemple.

5° *Eléments divers.* — La plupart des *Vinaya* mentionnent des éléments accessoires fort divers. Ainsi, les Mahīśāsaka prescrivent de planter des arbres à droite et à gauche du *stūpa* (T. 1421, p. 173 *a*), les Dharmaguptaka signalent un pédiluve (洗足器, *pādadhāvana*), un déambulatoire (道行, *caṅkrama*) en pierre, des [nattes] à étendre sur le sol (地敷, *bhūmyāstaraṇa*), des terrasses élevées (高臺, *prāsāda*) qui peuvent être des tours, des estrades ou des autels car l'expression est ambiguë, et des chars (車, *ratha*) [T. 1428, p. 956 *c*-957 *a*]. Les Sarvāstivādin parlent aussi de chars [ornés] d'or, d'argent et de perles. Ils mentionnent en outre un siège de diamant (金剛座, *vajrāsana*), réplique du trône légendaire du Buddha au moment de l'Éveil, des boîtes à parfums (香奩) [T. 1435, p. 415 *c*], des vases pour mettre les fleurs, des cordes suspendues tout autour du *stūpa* pour y accrocher les fleurs (T. 1435, p. 351 *c*), une cible pour y placer des fleurs (安華 —), c'est-à-dire une colonne surmontée d'un chapiteau, et, sur la terrasse circulaire (團堂), des arbres (木) pour y suspendre des bannières (T. 1435, p. 352 *a*). Les Mūlasarvāstivādin, qui interdisent de percer le *stūpa* avec des chevilles, disent que, « si le *stūpa* est grand et élevé, il faut l'escalader [si c'est nécessaire pour une raison quelconque] au moyen de cordes (繩) attachées au-dessous des signes de roues » (T. 1452, p. 429 *c*).

C. La construction du stūpa reliquaire

Nous possédons beaucoup moins de renseignements sur la construction du *stūpa* reliquaire que sur celle du *stūpa* monument.

Le reliquaire doit être un vase neuf, nous apprennent les Dharmaguptaka (T. 1428, p. 957 *b*), les Mūlasarvāstivādin (T. 1451, p. 261 *c*) et le *P'i-ni-mou king* (T. 1463, p. 816*c*). Les premiers prescrivent un *stūpa* d'or, d'argent ou de joyaux de toute sorte (T. 1428, p. 957 *a*), les seconds une urne (瓶) d'or et de joyaux (T. 1451, p. 261 *c*) et le dernier un vase (器) ou une urne faits des sept joyaux (T. 1463, p. 816 *c*). Dans le même passage, les Dharmaguptaka conseillent encore de placer les reliques dans une doublure de ouate de soie (綿綿裹), dans une étoffe (衣) de *pouo-seu-tan-lan-p'ouo* (鉢肆酖嵐婆, *pṛṣṭhalamba*)? ou dans une étoffe de *t'eou-t'eou-lo* (頭頭羅, *dhudhura?*). De nos jours encore, les reliques et les reliquaires sont enveloppés dans des étoffes de prix.

On ne nous dit rien de la forme de ces reliquaires, mais leur nom de *stūpa*, l'archéologie et l'observation de ceux qui existent présentement nous montrent que cette forme était identique à celle des grands *stūpa* monumentaux. Notons à ce propos que les reliquaires chrétiens ont souvent la forme de chapelles et que les urnes funéraires de divers pays antiques ressemblaient aux habitations des vivants.

Nous avons davantage de données en ce qui concerne l'emplacement de ces reliquaires. L'anecdote du prince Gopāla ou Gopāli recontée par les Dharmaguptaka et dans le *P'i-ni-mou king* nous apprend que les reliquaires étaient souvent placés au centre des *stūpa* monumentaux (T. 1428, p. 957 *b*; T. 1463, p. 816 *c*). Les Mūlasarvāstivādin et les Sarvāstivādin confirment ce fait (T. 1451, p. 222 *c*, 261 *c*, 402 *a–c*; T. 1435, p. 352 *a*), et l'archéologie également.

Les Sarvāstivādin sont seuls à nous parler d'un autre emplacement du reliquaire : on fait sortir de la maison la tête d'une poutre (出 舍 栿 頭); on y place un chapiteau (安 櫨 栱); on y dresse une colonne pour faire un *stūpa* (施 柱 作 塔); on orne la colonne du *stūpa* (塔 柱) de couleurs diverses, d'ocre rouge et de chaux; on fait des images (畫) sur la colonne du *stūpa* (T. 1435, p. 352 *a*).

D. Le culte rendu au stūpa

Le culte rendu au *stūpa* est décrit en détail dans les divers *Vinayapiṭaka* et l'on peut même dire, si l'on considère la masse des renseignements qui nous sont fournis à ce sujet, que c'est surtout à ce titre que le *stūpa* intéressait les auteurs des recueils de discipline.

Ces données concernent les diverses sortes d'offrandes faites au *stūpa*, les images et les statues qui ornent le monument ou ses annexes, les actes cultuels, les interdits cultuels, les idées religieuses sous-jacentes à ce culte et les règles relatives aux biens des *stūpa*.

I. Les offrandes

Les offrandes sont de nature très diverse : fleurs, parfums et onguents, lampes, parasols, bannières, nourriture, musique, etc.

1° *Les fleurs.* — Elles sont signalées dans toutes nos sources et semblent avoir constitué l'offrande la plus courante, sans doute à cause de leur prix généralement modique. Il en est de même de nos jours, aussi bien dans le culte bouddhique que dans le culte hindou avec, semble-t-il, une prédominance dans le premier. Ces offrandes de fleurs se présentent souvent, selon nos textes, sous forme de guirlandes (Mahāsāṅghika, T. 1425, p. 498 *b*; Dharmaguptaka, T. 1428, p. 957 *a*; Sarvāstivādin, T. 1435, p. 351 *c*; Mūlasarvāstivādin, T. 1451, p. 249 *b*; T. 1452, p. 429 *bc*; *P'i-ni-mou king*, T. 1463, p. 828 *b*).

Les Mahāsāṅghika nous donnet des précisions intéressantes sur l'origine et la nature de ces fleurs (T. 1425, p. 498 *b*). Les unes proviennent des jardins du *stūpa* et sont des fleurs d'arbres : *āmra* (manguier), *jambu* (jambousier), *vaṃsa* (bambou), *campaka* (gingembre), *atimuktaka* (liane du manguier), *sumanā* (sorte de jasmin), « à fleurs de dragon » (*nāgapuṣpa*, plantes diverses), « sanschagrin » (*aśoka*), et « des fleurs de toutes saisons ». Les autres proviennent des étangs du *stūpa* et sont des variétés de lotus : *utpala* (lotus bleu), *padma* (lotus rouge), *kumuda* (nénufar blanc), *puṇḍarīka* (lotus blanc) et « toutes sortes de

fleurs mélangées ». Le *P'i-ni-mou king* nous fournit aussi quelques données sur les fleurs d'offrande : *utpala* (lotus bleu), *vārṣika* (variété de jasmin), *campaka* (gingembre), *atimuktaka* (liane du manguier) et des fleurs artificielles : en or battu, en argent battu, en étain blanc, en étain et plomb, en bois, en étoffe, en rubans (T. 1463, p. 828 *b*). Les Mūlasarvāstivādin signalent, de leur côté, des guirlandes de fleurs d'or et d'argent (T. 1452, p. 429 *b–c*).

Les Mahāsāṅghika prescrivent aussi de faire des offrandes, notamment de fleurs, dans les *caitya* (T. 1425, p. 498 *b*).

Les Dharmaguptaka, les Sarvāstivādin et les Mūlasarvāstivādin donnent des précisions sur les endroits où placer les fleurs. Selon les premiers, celles-ci peuvent être placées dans les abris destinés aux offrandes, sur le soubassement du *stūpa*, sur la barrière, sur le poteau en « dent de dragon » (*nāgadanta* = ivoire), dans l'espace compris entre les deux perrons (嚮中), enfilées sur des cordes et suspendues, devant le bord saillant du toit des bâtiments (屋簷前) [T. 1428, p. 956 *c* et 957 *a*]. D'après les Sarvāstivādin, on peut placer les fleurs dans des vases, sur des pieux courbés ou enfilées sur des cordes suspendues tout autour du monument (T. 1435, p. 351 *c*), enfin sur une cible destinée à cet effet (p. 352 *a*). Les Mūlasarvāstivādin prescrivent de placer les guirlandes de fleurs sur les poteaux d'ivoire et non pas sur le *stūpa* ou accrochées à des chevilles perçant celui-ci (T. 1452, p. 429 *b–c*). Les Dharmaguptaka aussi interdisent le dépôt des offrandes sur le *stūpa* ou sur les statues qui l'ornent (T. 1428, p. 956 *c*).

Enfin, les Mahāsāṅghika considèrent indispensable d'ôter les fleurs séchées qui salissent le *stūpa* (T. 1452, p. 429 *c*).

2° *Les parfums et les onguents.* — Les offrandes de parfums sont signalées également par toutes nos sources, mais ce sont seulement les Dharmaguptaka, les Sarvāstivādin et surtout les Mūlasarvāstivādin qui nous donnent quelques détails à leur sujet.

D'après les premiers, s'il y a beaucoup de pâte parfumée (香泥), on peut en faire des images (像) de mains, des images de roues, des images de Mahendra, des images de rotin, des images de vigne, des images de fleurs de lotus. Pour faire d'autres images, il faut utiliser de la terre pâteuse, c'est-à-dire humectée d'eau (T. 1428, p. 957 *a*).

Les Sarvāstivādin parlent d'onguents (T. 1435, p. 352 *a*, 415 *c*), d'huile parfumée (p. 415 *c*), des parfums des fleurs, des parfums en branches et des onguents (p. 415 *c*). Ils prescrivent d'enduire de parfums (香塗) des morceaux de murs (牆壁分), de disposer des boîtes à parfum (布香奩 ou 僉 叏), de répandre les parfums des fleurs et d'arroser le sol avec de l'huile parfumée (p. 415 *c*).

Les Mūlasarvāstivādin mentionnent aussi l'huile parfumée (T. 1452, p. 429 *c*), les onguents (T. 1451, p. 249 *b*, 400 *b c*), les parfums en branches, terme qui doit désigner l'encens en baguettes (T. 1451, p. 249 *b*) comme le parfum des branches allumées (T. 1451, p. 400 *b–c*). Ils parlent également d'un onguent parfumé dont on enduit le *stūpa* avec les mains (T. 1451, p. 208 *b*) et des trente sortes d'eaux délicieusement parfumées dont le roi Kıkin arrosa le *stūpa* du

Buddha Kāśyapa (T. 1451, p. 261 *c*). Ces eaux parfumées et ces onguents servent aussi à purifier les pieds des personnes chargées de grimper sur le *stūpa* (T. 1452, p. 429 *c*). L'eau parfumée dont on lave (洗) le *stūpa* doit contenir du minéral pourpre (紫礦), de l'or odorant (— 金 : *Curcuma longa*) et du bois de santal rouge (梅檀) [T. 1452, p. 429 *c*].

Seuls, les Dharmaguptaka nous donnent une indication sur les endroits où doivent être placés ces parfums : sur le dessus de la barrière ou sous les abris construits à cet effet [T. 1428, p. 956 *c*).

3° *Les lampes.* — Celles-ci ne sont mentionnées que par les Mahāsāṅghika, les Dharmaguptaka, les Sarvāstivādin et les Mūlasarvāstivādin, mais il y a lieu de croire qu'elles étaient employées comme offrandes par les autres sectes également car elles sont, de nos jours, couramment utilisées dans le culte bounddhique comme dans le culte hindou.

D'après les Mahāsāṅghika, elles sont achetées avec le surplus des fleurs qui poussent dans les jardins et les étangs des *stūpa* (T. 1425, p. 498 *b*). Les Dharmaguptaka et les Mūlasarvāstivādin précisent qu'il s'agit de lampes à huile (T. 1428, p. 956 *c* et 957 *a*; T. 1452, p. 429 *b*). Les premiers prescrivent de les poser, sous les abris à offrandes, avec les fleurs, les parfums, etc. (T. 1428, p. 956 *c*). Les seconds donnent plus de détails : on les dispose en files, sur les degrés du *stūpa*, ou sous les degrés, sur un arbre à lampes, sur un haut rebord saillant de toit (T. 1452, p. 429 *b*), toutes dispositions qui, malgré les inconvénients signalés par ce texte, sont encore utilisées aujourd'hui. Quant aux Sarvāstivādin, ils se contentent de prescrire la construction d'un « endroit pour les lampes » (燈處) [T. 1435, p. 352 *a*] et la mise en ordre et l'allumage des lampes (p. 415 *c*).

4° *Les parasols.* — Il faut distinguer les parasols à signes de roue qui, généralement en pierre ou du moins en matériau durable, font partie intégrante de la structure du *stūpa* et ont été examinés plus haut dans ce sens, des véritables parasols donnés en offrande. Il semble du reste bien que les premiers dérivent des seconds et que les premiers *stūpa* n'aient pas comportè de parasols de pierre mais reçu en hommage des objets en matériaux légers que l'on disposait sur la terrasse supérieure du monument. On doit noter à cet égard que seuls les Mahāsāṅghika, les Mūlasarvāstivādin et le *Pi-nai-ye* mentionnent les parasols du premier type, ce qui laisse supposer que les autres sectes, Mahīśāsaka — qui parlent pourtant du « plateau pour recevoir la rosée » (*varṣasthāla*) —, Dharmaguptaka et Sarvāstivādin, et le *P'i-ni-mou king*, ignoraient encore leur usage à l'époque où furent fixés les passages de leurs *Vinayapiṭaka* qui nous intéressent ici.

Les Mahāsāṅghika plaçaient les parasols à l'intérieur des niches du *stūpa* et en faisaient aussi offrande au *caitya* sans préciser à quel endroit de ceux-ci ils les disposaient (T. 1425, p. 498 *a* et *c*). Les Mahīśāsaka se contentent de mentionner les parasols parmi les offrandes faites au *stūpa* mais n'indiquent nullement leur emplacement (T. 1421, p. 172 *c*). Il en est de même du *Pi-nai-ye* (T.

1464, p. 897 *c*). Selon les Dharmaguptaka, on peut placer les parasols sur le *stūpa* — au sommet? — ou dans les abris destinés à recevoir les offrandes (T. 1428, p. 956 *c*). Les Sarvāstivādin mentionnent les parasols fleuris qui ornent, semble-t-il, le pavillon sommital (*harmikā*) [T. 1435, p. 415 *c*]. Les Mūlasarvāstivādin parlent de parasols ornés de joyaux (T. 1451, p. 249 *b*) et de parasols à bannières qui sont suspendus au *stūpa* (T. 1451, p. 261 *c* et 400 *b–c*) ou placés dessus (T. 1452, p. 429 *c*).

Les Mahāsāṅghika, les Dharmaguptaka, les Mūlasarvāstivādin et le *Pi-nai-ye* associent si étroitement les termes « parasol » et « bannière » que l'on est tenté de comprendre « parasol à bannières », c'est-à-dire parasol auquel sont suspendues des bannières.

5° *Les bannières.* — Le rôle du parasol (*chattra*) est aisé à interpréter : c'est un symbole royal, et peut-être même solaire, qui nous rappelle la relation étroite existant entre le Buddha et le monarque universel, le roi « qui fait tourner la Roue » (*cakravartin*), roue dont le parasol peut donner l'image — souvenons-nous que les « signes de roue », symbolisant la Loi, figurent sur les parasols fixes du *stūpa*. Il est plus difficile d'expliquer la présence des bannières ou étendards (*dhvaja*) parmi les offrandes faites au *stūpa*. En tant qu'emblèmes de la victoire, donc de la royauté, on comprend qu'elles soient souvent étroitement associées aux parasols, comme nous venons de le voir. Cependant, il est permis d'y voir aussi le souvenir des vêtements des cadavres suspendus au-dessus des tumuli funéraires dont dérivent les *stūpa* et dont nous parle justement le *P'i-ni-mou king* (T. 1463, p. 815 *c*), vêtements ainsi abandonnés parce qu'impurs et, par là même, sacrés.

Ce que les Mahāsāṅghika, les Mahīśāsaka, les Dharmaguptaka, les Sarvāstivādin, les Mūlasarvāstivādin et le *Pi-nai-ye* disent au sujet des parasols s'applique exactement aux bannières, en grande partie en raison de la relation étroite qui lie ces deux éléments dans la plupart de nos sources.

Cependant, celles-ci nous fournissent des renseignements supplémentaires au sujet des bannières. Ainsi, les Mahāsāṅghika, les Sarvāstivādin et les Mūlasarvāstivādin précisent qu'il s'agit de bannières de soie. Les Dharmaguptaka indiquent que certaines d'entre elles portaient des images de lions, d'éléphants (littéralement : *nāga*, terme ambigu que les Chinois traduisent toujours par « dragon ») et de zébus (T. 1428, p. 957 *c*). Les Mūlasarvāstivādin représentaient aussi des lions, des bœufs, des éléphants (*nāga* : ou dragons) et des « oiseaux aux ailes d'or » (*suvarṇapakṣa*, surnom de Garuḍa le milan sacré de Viṣṇu) sur leurs étendards de soie (T. 1452, p. 429 *c*). Si les Sarvāstivādin ne nous informent pas de In nature des images ornant leurs bannières, ils nous expliquent que ces dernières étaient tendues (引) devant les figures symbolisant le Buddha, suspendues audessus du lion de cuivre dressé sur un pilier et accrochées aux arbres qui s'élevaient sur la terrasse circulaire du *stūpa* (T. 1435, p. 352 *a*). De nos jours, il est tout à fait courant de voir, à Ceylan notamment, des bannières accrochées aux arbres de *bodhi* des monastères.

6° *La nourriture et la boisson.* — Ces sortes d'offrandes font partie du culte hindou et même du culte bouddhique, de nos jours encore. Cependant, si elles se justifient dans le culte rendu à des divinités considérées comme vivantes et par conséquent obligées de se sustenter, elles semblent étranges dans celui qui s'adresse à des Buddha ou à des saints qui ont disparu dans le Nirvāṇa. Seuls, les Mahāsāṅghika (T. 1425, p. 498 *c*), les Dharmaguptaka (T. 1428, p. 956 *c*, 957 *a* et *c*), les Sarvāstivādin (T. 1435, p. 352 *b*) et les Mūlasarvāstivādin (T. 1451, p. 249 *b*) parlent des offrandes de nourriture, encore n'y font-ils qu'une simple allusion, à l'exception des Dharmaguptaka. Ceux-ci mentionnent les offrandes de boisson avec celles de nourriture, de même que les Mahāsāṅghika. Il semble donc que ce genre d'offrandes ait été assez négligé, sans doute pour les raisons exposées ci-dessus. Du reste, et c'est assez caractéristique, les seuls qui nous donnent des détails à leur sujet, les Dharmaguptaka, commencent par les justifier, ce qui n'est fait nulle part pour aucune autre sorte d'offrandes. Voici le passage qui les concerne et qui mérite d'être cité tout au long : « Alors, à l'égard de Śāriputra et de Maudgalyāyana, ils [les donateurs] eurent cette pensée » : « Quand ces deux hommes étnient en vie, nous leur faisions toujours offrande de nourriture et de boisson. Maintenant qu'ils sont dans le Nirvāṇa, si le Bienheureux nous permet de présenter à leurs *stūpa* des offrandes d'aliments et de boissons des meilleurs, nous les leur présenterons ». Les moines s'adressèrent au Buddha. Le Buddha dit : « J'autorise ces offrandes ». Comme ils ne savaient pas quels récipients utiliser pour mettre la nourriture, le Buddha dit : « Je permets d'utiliser des bols (*pātra*) d'or et d'argent, des vases de joyaux, des vases de joyaux de toute sorte ». Comme ils ne savaient pas comment les apporter, le Buddha dit : « Je permets qu'on les transporte sur des éléphants, des chevaux, des chars (車, *ratha*), des véhicules (乘, *yāna*), qu'on les transporte au moyen de deux hommes, ou sur la tête, ou qu'on les porte sur l'épaule » (T. 1428, p. 956 *c*). Plus loin, ils nous expliquent que la nourriture et la boisson offertes au *stūpa* doivent être consommées par les moines, par les novices (*śrāmaṇera*), ou par les fidèles laïcs (*upāsaka*), ou, de préférence semble-t-il, par ceux qui ont établi les plans et construit le *stūpa* (經營作者, 塔作者, T. 1428, p. 957 *a* et 957 *c*). On peut noter aussi que, selon les Mahāsāṅghika, si les fleurs des jardins du *stūpa* doivent être offertes au Buddha, c'est-à-dire au *stūpa*, les fruits doivent être donnés à la Communauté (T. 1425, p. 498 *b*).

7° *La musique, le chant et la danse.* — Toutes nos sources mentionnent les offrandes de musique aux *stūpa* ou aux reliquaires. Seul, le *Pi-nai-ye* précise de quelle musique il s'agit : celle des tambours et des conques (T. 1464, p. 897 *c*). Les Dharmaguptaka aussi font allusion aux conques (T. 1428, p. 956 *c*-957 *a*). Les Mahāsāṅghika et les Mahīśāsaka parlent également de chant et de danse (哥欠舞) [T. 1421, p. 173 *a*; T. 1425, p. 498 *c*], et le *Pi-nai-ye* de chant (倡) [T. 1464, p. 897 *c*]. Selon les Mahīśāsaka et les Dharmaguptaka, les moines ne devaient pas exécuter eux-mêmes de musique, de chant ni de danse, ce qui, d'après les premiers, aurait scandalisé les laïcs, mais ils pouvaient les faire exé-

cuter par ces derniers (T. 1421, p. 173 *a*; T. 1428, p. 957 *a*). En fait, dans les textes des autres écoles, ces offrandes particulières ne sont jamais faites par les moines et, dans les quelques cas où l'on précise la nature de leurs exécutants, il s'agit toujours de laïcs.

8° *Offrandes diverses.* — Parmi les offrandes d'autre nature que signalent nos sources, il faut noter en premier lieu les pierres précieuses, généralement sous forme de colliers, dont parlent les Sarvāstivādin, les Mūlasarvāstivādin et les Dharmaguptaka (T. 1435, p. 415 *c*; T. 1428, p. 957 *a*; T. 1451, p. 249 *b*). Les deux premières sectes mentionnent aussi les clochettes d'or ou de joyaux (T. 1435, p. 415 *c;* T. 1451, p. 222 *c*).

Les Mahāsāṅghika préconisent encore les offrandes de vêtements (衣服) [T. 1425, p. 498 *c*], ce qui, d'après le contexte, semble être un don symbolique au Buddha au même titre que celui de nourriture, de boisson, etc.

Les Dharmaguptaka mentionnent également parmi ces dons des estrades élevées (高臺) qui peuvent être des sortes de tables à offrandes (mais cf. ci-dessus B, VI, 5) et des chars (車) [T. 1428, p. 957 *a*]. Les Sarvāstivādin signalent aussi les chars parmi les ornements des *stūpa* (T. 1435, p. 415 *c*). L'usage de ces véhicules ne peut guère s'expliquer que dans le transport solennel des reliques, dans des processions comme celle du Perahera de Kandy qui se célèbre encore aujourd'hui. Nous verrons du reste un peu plus loin quele transport des reliques était soumis à des règles précises qui nous sont rapportées justement par les Dharmaguptaka. Devons-nous en déduire que les processions de reliques étaient courantes dans les grands monastères bouddhiques de l'Antiquité et qu'à côté de chaque grand *stūpa* on trouvait, comme de nos jours à la porte des temples hindous, un char richement orné servant à ces cérémonies? Ou bien un tel usage était-il limité à certaines régions? Aucun de nos textes ne nous donne malheureusement de précisions à ce sujet.

II. Les images et les statues

Les images et les statues jouent un rôle particulier dans le culte. Seul le *P'i-ni-mou king* semble faire allusion à l'offrande de ces objets au *stūpa* (T. 1463, p. 828 *b*). Les cinq *Vinayapiṭaka* nous donnent d'intéressantes précisions sur les images et les statues (形, 像, 畫) qui ornent le *stūpa* et ses dépendances, *caitya*, etc.

Comme nous l'avons vu plus haut, on trouve ces images, statues ou peintures, dans les niches (Mahāsāṅghika, Mahīśāsaka), dans les *caitya* (Mahāsāṅghika, Mūlasarvāstivādin), sur des piliers (Mahīśāsaka, Sarvāstivādin) ou sur les bannières (Dharmaguptaka, Mūlasarvāstivādin), ou peintes sur le *stūpa* (Sarvāstivādin).

Quant à la nature de ces images, seuls les Mūlasarvāstivādin mentionnent le Buddha, qui est représenté dans un *caitya*, flanqué de deux disciples, les autres saints à la suite, et les profanes au dehors (T. 1459, p. 652 *c*). Les Sarvāstivādin

précisent qu'on ne peut pas faire d'images du corps du Buddha (如佛身像不應作) mais seulement de celui du Bodhisattva (T. 1435, p. 352 *a*). De même, dans leurs *caitya*, les Mahāsāṅghika, s'ils n'hésitaient pas à faire des images des Bodhisattva, représentaient les Buddha et les Pratyekabuddha par des symboles, les premiers par des empreintes de pied, les seconds par des cavernes (T. 1425, p. 498 *b*). Cependant, un peu plus loin, ils mentionnent les images du Buddha (p. 499 *a*), mais le paragraphe en question semble plus récent que les précédents. Par conséquent, les passages concernant les *stūpa* dans les *Vinayapiṭaka*, à la seule exception de celui des Mūlasarvāstivādin dont le caractère tardif est bien connu, ont été fixés avant le début de notre ère, puisque l'art gréco-bouddhique, caractérisé notamment par les statues du Buddha, fait son apparition au Gandhāra et dans les régions voisines dans le courant du Ier siècle après le Christ.

Un autre sujet dont la représentation était interdite, selon les Sarvāstivādin, était l'union des hommes et des femmes (男女和合像) [T. 1435, p. 351 *c*], et c'était même, s'il faut les en croire, le seul genre d'image que réprouvait formellement le Buddha[10]. Ceci laisse à penser que les figures érotiques qui, de nos jours encore, ornent tant de temples hindous, servaient déjà, à cette lointaine époque, de décoration à de nombreux sanctuaires et menaçaient de se répandre sur les monuments bouddhiques eux-mêmes. On ne peut y voir qu'un produit du culte de la fécondité qui plonge ses racines dans la préhistoire et est encore bien vivant dans l'Hindouisme moderne.

Les seuls Dharmaguptaka parlent d'images faites de pâte parfumée (香泥) et représentant des mains, des roues, du rotin, de la vigne, des fleurs de lotus et aussi Mahendra, le roi des dieux (T. 1428, p. 957 *a*). Par leur diversité, ces images s'apparentent à celles qui sont conseillées pour la décoration des monastères par les Dharmaguptaka eux-mêmes (T. 1428, p. 937 *c*, 941 *a*) et par les Mahāsāṅghika (T. 1425, p. 496 *c*-497 *a*). Ces figures de pâte parfumée font penser à celles qui sont façonnées dans le culte hindou. Les images de mains sont probablement celles que laisse la main enduite de pâte et appuyée sur un mur, selon une coutume qui remonte à la préhistoire et qui, selon certains documents archéologiques, faisait effectivement partie du culte des *stūpa*. L'image de Mahendra surprend un peu ici, mais il ne faut pas oublier que, dès l'origine, le Bouddhisme accueillit les divinités hindoues qu'il convertit en divinités gardiennes du Dharma. De nos jours encore, il est tout à fait courant de les voir, non seulement représentées en matériaux durables, mais honorées dans l'enceinte même des temples bouddhiques, à Ceylan par exemple.

Il est certaines figures sur lesquelles insistent plus particulièrement nos sources : ce sont celles d'animaux ou, plus précisément, de certains animaux. On les trouve peintes au-dessus des niches chez les Mahāsāṅghika, sculptées au sommet de piliers chez les Mahīśāsaka et les Sarvāstivādin, peintes sur des banniéres chez les Dharmaguptaka et les Mūlasarvāstivādin (T. 1421, p. 173 *a*; T. 1425, p. 498 *a*; T. 1428, p. 957 *c*; T. 1435, p. 352 *a*; T. 1452, p. 429 *c*). Parmi ces animaux vient en tête *le lion*, qui est cité par tous, puis l'éléphant, appelé

parfois « dragon » par suite de l'ambiguïté du mot sanskrit *nāga*[11], et qu'ignorent les seuls Sarvāstivādin. Le bœuf ou zébu est cité par les Dharmaguptaka et les Mūlasarvāstivādin et figure certainement parmi les « quadrupèdes de toutes sortes » (種種獸) dont parlent les Mahīśāsaka. Enfin, les Mūlasarvāstivādin sont les seuls à mentionner l'oiseau aux ailes d'or (*suvarṇapakṣa*) qui est le *garuḍa*, le milan sacré, monture de Viṣṇu et symbole solaire. Par contre, et ceci est étonnant, aucun de nos textes ne signale le cheval, qui, avec le lion, l'éléphant et le zébu, forme le quatuor des animaux symboliques dans le Bouddhisme ancien. Ceux-ci sont figurés, bien avant notre ère, sur les monuments comme le fameux chapiteau de Sārnāth ou le Kaṇṭakacetiya de Mihintale à Ceylan. Guère plus tard, on les voit représentés avec une constance notable sur les pierres de seuil en demi-lune à Nāgārjunikoṇḍa puis, à Ceylan, à Anurādhapura et jusqu'à Polonnaruwa dont les édifices datent des environs du XIIe siècle.

Si l'on en croit les Sarvāstivādin et les Mahāsāṅghika, certaines de ces images étaient honorées d'un culte. Devant la figure représentant le Bodhisattva, on tendait des bannières comme, disent les premiers, on en tendait devant le futur Buddha alors qu'il résidait encore dans sa maison (在家). Dans les *caitya*, devant les images symbolisant les Bodhisattva, les Pratyekabuddha et les Buddha, on peut déposer des fleurs et des offrandes, nous disent les Mahāsāṅghika. Si ce culte rendu à des images qui représentent ou symbolisent de saints personnages s'explique fort bien, celui que les Sarvāstivādin semblent adresser au lion de cuivre érigé sur un pilier est plus surprenant. On peut attacher, selon eux, des bannières audessus de lui et, si l'on interprète bien le contexte, on lui fait des offrandes de parfums, de fleurs, de lampes et de musique (T. 1435, p. 352 *a*). Ce lion, dont la base du pilier est entourée d'une barrière comme le *stūpa*, représentait sans doute le Buddha, « le lion des Śākya » (*śākyasiṃha*) qui, assis sur « le trône du lion » (*siṃhāsana*), « rugit » (*nadati*) ou pousse le « rugissement du lion » (*siṃhanāda*) quand il élève la voix pour prêcher le Dharma. Notons du reste qu'à l'encontre des autres sectes, les Sarvāstivādin ne mentionnent que le lion parmi les animaux dont l'image se rencontre sur le terrain du *stūpa*. Pour eux, donc, cet animal doit être considéré seul, en dehors du quatuor dont nous avons parlé plus haut.

III. Les actes cultuels

L'acte cultuel par excellence est l'offrande, qui relève de la vertu de don (*dāna*), la meilleure de toutes, celle sur laquelle les légendes et les sermons adressés aux laïcs ont le plus insisté. Aussi les détails concernant les diverses sortes d'offrandes sont-ils nombreux dans nos textes, comme nous venons de le voir. Par contre, les autres actes cultuels sont presque ignorés de nos sources. Voici les éléments que l'on en peut tirer à ce sujet.

1° *Les vœux accompagnant les offrandes.* — D'après les Mahāsāṅghika, les offrandes de fleurs, de parfums, de musique, de vêtements, de boissons et

d'aliments sont faites « pour qu'il y ait abondance en ce monde et faire en sorte que tous les êtres, pendant la longue nuit [des transmigrations], obtiennent la paix et le bonheur » (T. 1425, p. 498*c*). Le vœu (願) émis à cette occasion par les Mūlasarvāstivādin est différent : « Grâce aux racines de bien (*kuśalamūla*) existant dans le champ de mérite (*puṇyakṣetra*) suprême (*anuttara*) de ces offrandes, puissé-je, de naissance en naissance, parvenir à la fin des existences, à ce qui est caractérisé par l'absence de vieillesse du corps ». Il est accompagné de louanges répétées prononcées en déposant les offrandes (T. 1451, p. 249 *b*). Les stances qui, dans le *Vinayapiṭaka* des Mahāsāṅghika, accompagnent l'histoire du *stūpa* du Buddha Kāśyapa insistent sur la bonne pensée (善 心, *kuśala citta*) avec laquelle on rend hommage et on fait des offrandes de fleurs et de parfums à un *stūpa*; cette bonne pensée est dite supérieure au don de cent mille pièces d'or ou de cent mille charretées d'or (T. 1425, p. 497 *c*).

Seuls, donc, les Mahāsāṅghika et les Mūlasarvāstivādin font allusion à l'aspect et à la valeur spirituels de l'offrande, les premiers mettant l'accent sur la nature altruiste du vœu qui doit accompagner celle-ci. Tous les autres textes passent sous silence la partie mentale du culte. Il est surprenant que nos textes, si minutieux pour tout ce qui concerne le comportement des moines et des fidèles laïcs, se taisent à propos des dispositions mentales des donateurs. Faut-il comprendre que l'acte d'offrande suffisait par lui-même et n'avait nul besoin de s'accompagner de pensées pieuses? Ceci s'accorderait mal avec l'esprit même du Bouddhisme indien qui, presque toujours au cours de sa longue histoire, et *a fortiori* à cette lointaine époque, est demeuré une religion intérieure dans laquelle les rites ne jouaient qu'un rôle secondaire. Faut-il comprendre au contraire que ces vœux étaient d'usage tellement courant, étaient si bien la norme que les auteurs de nos textes ont cru pouvoir les négliger? Cela semble fort en contraste avec leur esprit si minutieux, mais il est vrai que les *Vinayapitṭaka*, au contraire des *Sūtrapiṭaka* et des *Abhidharmapiṭaka*, ne soufflent mot des nombreuses pratiques spirituelles, méditations, recueillements, etc., qui constituaient l'essence même de la « religion » bouddhique. Serait-ce alors que le culte des *stūpa* avait trop peu d'importance pour s'accompagner de vœux et de pensées religieuses? L'abondance et la minutie des détails reproduits ici prouvent le contraire. On ne peut dire non plus que ce culte était l'affaire exclusive des lac̄s car, dans presque toutes nos sources, les conseils donnés à son sujet s'adressent aux moines autant et même plus qu'aux laïcs. Pour clore ce paragraphe, disons qu'aujourd'hui, à Ceylan où le Bouddhisme indien ancien s'est conservé, le culte rendu aux *stūpa* par les laïcs comme par les moines s'accompagne normalement de méditation et surtout de la récitation, mentale ou à voix haute, de certaines stances (*gāthā*).

2° *Les modalités de l'offrande.* — Nous possédons peu de renseignements sur les modalités de l'offrande, sur la façon dont elle doit être faite.

D'après les Mahāsāṅghika, les moines sont autorisés à « tenir » (持, DHṚ), c'est-à-dire à apporter des offrandes aux *stūpa* et aux *caitya* le jour de la naissance du Buddha, le jour où il a obtenu la Voie [c'est-à-dire la Bodhi], le jour où

il a mis en mouvement la Roue de la Loi et le jour de la grande assemblée quinquennale (*pañcavarṣika*) [T. 1425, p. 498 *b*]. Un peu plus loin, ils sont autorisés, ces quatre mêmes jours, à recueillir (收) des offrandes pour les*caitya*, c'est-à-dire à sortir (出) les offrandes de parasols et de bannières (*Ibid.*, p. 498*c*). On notera avec une certaine surprise que parmi ces jours solennels ne figure pas celui du Parinirvāṇa, qui est remplacé par celui de la grande assemblée quinquennale. Or, il semble qu'on devrait logiquement rendre un culte au *stūpa* surtout le jour anniversaire du Parinirvāṇa, événement dont le *stūpa* est précisément le symbole comme l'atteste l'art bouddhique le plus ancien. De plus, quelques lignes plus haut, le même texte cite le lieu du Parinirvāṇa parmi les quatre endroits où sont érigés les principaux *caitya*[12].

Les mêmes Mahāsāṅghika précisent que ces offrandes « tenues » par les moines doivent être divisées en deux parts : les offrandes moyennes et supérieures (中上者) devant être addressées au *stūpa* du Buddha, les offrandes inférieures (下者) au *caitya* (*Ibid.*, p. 498 *b–c*).

A propos de la collecte des offrandes, le même texte déclare que tous les moines doivent récolter ensemble (共收) et eux-mêmes. Quel que soit leur mode de vie ou leur degré dans la hiérarchie, doyen (*sthavira*), ermite forestier (*āraṇyaka*), mendiant (*piṇḍapātika*), moine vêtu de haillons (*pāṃśukulika*) ou vénérable (大德, *bhadanta*), ils ne doivent pas arguer de ces distinctions personnelles pour se dispenser de prendre part à cette cérémonie. Dès que la pluie et le vent ont cessé, ils doivent quitter leur résidence et rejoindre le monastère le plus proche pour récolter les offrandes avec les autres moines. Le lieu de réunion doit être asséché si la pluie l'a rendu humide et balayé soigneusement (T. 1425, p. 498 *c*).

Les Dharmaguptaka prescrivent de placer les offrandes de nourriture dans des bols (*pātra*) d'or et d'argent et dans des vases de joyaux de toutes sortes, et de les transporter sur des éléphants, des chevaux, des chars, des véhicules, de les faire transporter par deux hommes, de les porter sur la tête ou sur l'épaule (T. 1428, p. 956 *c*), exactement comme les petits reliquaires, ce qui laisse supposer que ces offrandes de nourriture n'avaient lieu qu'à certains jours solennels.

3° *Le transport des reliques.* — Selon les Dharmaguptaka, on doit transporter les reliques enfermées dans leurs reliquaires d'or, d'argent, de joyaux et d'étoffes précieuses sur des éléphants, des chevaux, des chars, des véhicules, des voitures traînées par des hommes, des civières, des bêtes de somme, sur l'épaule ou sur la tête (T. 1428, p. 957 *a* et *b*). Le *P'i-ni-mou king* donne des prescriptions semblables : sur des éléphants, des chevaux, des chars, des véhicules, sur l'épaule ou sur la tête (T. 1463, p. 816 *c*) et il ajoute : « Il faut faire toutes sortes de musique dès que l'on part ». C'est la seule indication qui nous soit donnée sur le rôle de la musique dans ces processions.

4° *Les marques de respect.* — Nous n'examinerons ici que les marques positives de respect, les marques négatives étant étudiées plus loin avec les autres

interdictions cultuelles. Ces marques positives sont très rarement citées, probablement parce qu'elles étaient courantes et empruntées aux règles de la politesse civile. Il peut sembler étrange que, décrites des milliers de fois dans les *Sūtrapiṭaka* et ailleurs dans les *Vinayapiṭaka* lorsqu'elles s'adressent à des personnages vivants, Buddha, saints ou simplement laïcs respectables, elles soient négligées ici.

Les Sarvāstivādin, les Dharmaguptaka et le *P'i-ni-mou king* se contentent de mentionner la circumambulation par la droite (*pradakṣiṇā*) autour des *stūpa* des Buddha et des Auditeurs (*śrāvaka*) [T. 1435, p. 298 *c*; T. 1428, p. 957 *c*; T. 1463, p. 825 *c*]. Les Mūlasarvāstivādin sont plus loquaces à ce sujet car, s'ils ne font que deux ou trois allusions à la *pradakṣiṇā* autour des *stūpa* (T. 1451, p. 249 *b* et 400 *b–c*; T. 1459, p. 619 *c*), ils nous donnent aussi des détails sur les autres signes de respect : « Ils s'avancèrent vers le *stūpa* et y étalèrent leurs offrandes en faisant des éloges abondants. Ils rendirent hommage avec les cinq roues [se prosternèrent avec les deux genoux, les deux coudes et le front sur le sol], et tournèrent autour par la droite. Ils s'agenouillèrent, joignirent les mains et firent ce vœu » (T. 1451, p. 249 *b*). C'est, en fait, le seul passage de nos textes où soient décrites ces marques de respect que représentent si souvent les bas-reliefs de l'art bouddhique même le plus ancien, et qui sont toujours en usage aujourd'hui.

Une autre marque de respect est signalée par les Dharmaguptaka et le *P'i-ni-mou king* (T. 1428, p. 957 *a*; T. 1463, p. 827 *c*) : pour essuyer le *stūpa*, les premiers préconisaient des feuilles d'arbres *tāla* [Borassus flabelliformis, c'est-à-dire des palmes], des feuilles d'arbre *mālu* [une liane, ou plutôt *mālūra*, Aegle marmelos] ou une queue de paon, et les seconds un chasse-mouche.

5° *Le cortège funèbre.* — Bien que celui-ci ne concerne pas exclusivement le culte bouddhique, il peut être intéressant de noter les détails qui s'y rapportent et que nous fournissent les Sarvāstivādin (T. 1435, p. 352 *a–b*). Dans ce récit, le célèbre donateur Anāthapiṇḍika, ayant vu des hommes et des femmes portant des ornements venir chez lui en apportant des plateaux et des guéridons sur lesquels étaient disposées des guirlandes de fleurs parfumées, eut cette pensée : « Est-ce bien de faire porter ces choses devant soi? ». Il demanda à ce sujet conseil au Buddha, qui le rassura. Il lui demanda ensuite : « Est-ce bien de faire porter devant soi des brûle-parfums? » et le Buddha le lui permit. Alors, un maître non-bouddhiste eut une pensée de jalousie et dit avec irritation : « C'est comme un cortège funèbre (送死人) ». Anāthapiṇḍika demanda aussitôt après la permission, qui lui fut accordée également, de faire exécuter de la musique devant une image, peut-être celle du Buddha, mais on ne sait si ces derniers traits peuvent s'appliquer aussi au cortège funèbre. Disons seulement que les funérailles indiennes actuelles s'accompagnent généralement de musique.

IV. Les interdictions cultuelles

Elles sont très nombreuses et précises, et contrastent par là avec les actes cultuels positifs sur lesquels, comme nous venons de le voir, nous n'avons que de rares et souvent vagues renseignements. On peut les classer selon les idées qui semblent les avoir inspirées, mais cette répartition est rendue parfois malaisée en raison de la complexité possible de ces motifs.

1° *Interdictions motivées par le respect.* — Dans l'enceinte du *stūpa* (在塔院中) on ne peut ni se couvrir la tête, ni se couvrir l'épaule, nous disent les Mahāsāṅghika (T. 1425, p. 498 *a*). Quand on porte un reliquaire, déclarent les Dharmaguptaka, il ne faut pas mettre ses vêtements sens dessus-dessous, les enrouler autour du cou, s'en envelopper la tête ni recouvrir les deux épaules mais les porter décemment et découvrir l'épaule droite (T. 1428, p. 957 *b*). Dans le même passage, le Buddha interdit de porter le reliquaire sous le bras, comme un paquet vulgaire, mais prescrit de le porter sur la tête ou sur l'épaule. Un peu plus loin, les mêmes Dharmaguptaka défendent de s'asseoir, les jambes étendues (舒脚坐), devant le *stūpa* [*Ibid.*, p. 958 *a*].

Selon les Sarvāstivādin, on ne doit pas rendre hommage à un homme devant un *stūpa* non plus que devant le Buddha [T. 1435, p. 300 *a*].

Les Dharmaguptaka donnent diverses prescriptions complémentaires relatives aux marques de respect dues au reliquaire. On ne doit pas passer la nuit dans une pièce plus belle que celle où est déposée l'urne contenant les reliques mais, au contraire, placer celle-ci dans la plus belle pièce et dormir dans la plus laide. On ne doit pas non plus passer la nuit dans une pièce d'un étage supérieur et laisser le reliquaire dans une pièce d'un étage inférieur, mais faire le contraire. On ne doit pas non plus passer la nuit dans la même pièce que l'urne aux reliques, si ce n'est pour la stabiliser et la garder. Dans ce cas, il faut placer l'urne sur un poteau, sur un poteau d'ivoire ou au sommet (須邊) de la pièce et dormir à ses pieds [T. 1428, p. 957 *b–c*].

Les mêmes Dharmaguptaka interdisent de passer la nuit à l'intérieur du *stūpa* (塔內), sauf pour le surveiller. On ne doit pas non plus cacher d'objets à l'intérieur du *stūpa*, sauf pour le consolider (堅牢) [T. 1428, p. 957 *c*]. Il ne s'ensuit certainement pas que les *stūpa* aient été creux, ou du moins que la chambre aux reliques ait été accessible du dehors, ce qui irait à l'encontre des données archéologiques. L'expression « à l'intérieur du *stūpa* » peut être comprise comme signifiant : soit à l'intérieur de l'enceinte, c'est-à-dire de la barrière, du *stūpa*, soit à l'intérieur des niches ou des abris destinés aux offrandes.

D'autres marques de respect semblent influencées par une arrière-pensée de pureté rituelle. Ainsi, les Mahāsāṅghika interdisent de porter des sandales de cuir dans l'enceinte du *stūpa* [T. 1425, p. 498 *a*]. Le *P'i-ni-mou king* interdit également de porter des chaussures ou des bottes ornées quand on entre dans un *stūpa* et quand on fait la circumambulation par la droite (*pradakṣiṇā*) autour d'un *stūpa* quoique cette dernière puisse être effectuée, semble-t-il, en étant

chaussé de bottes ornées [T. 1463, p. 825 *c*]. Les Dharmaguptaka donnent plus de détails sur les interdictions relatives aux chaussures. Selon eux, quand on porte un reliquaire, on ne doit pas avoir de sandales de cuir aux pieds [T. 1428, p. 957 *b*]. De même, on ne doit pas mettre de sandales de cuir pour entrer dans un *stūpa* ou faire la circumambulation autour de celui-ci. Il est même interdit de porter ses sandales à la main (捉) quand on entre dans un *stūpa*. Si, par contre, il est interdit d'entrer dans celui-ci en portant aux pieds ou à la main des bottes ornées, on peut faire la *pradakṣiṇā* en étant chaussé de ces dernières [T. 1428, p. 957 *c*-958 *a*]. Ces « bottes ornées » (富羅, translittération chinoise abréée d'un mot indien difficile à identifier) ne devaient pas comporter de parties en cuir comme les sandales, et c'est probablement ce qui leur valait le privilège cidessus.

L'image du *stūpa* devant être respectée, on ne doit pas faire un *stūpa* avec sa nourriture, puis le briser et le manger, nous disent les Mūlasarvāstivādin [T. 1459, p. 644 *c*].

D'autres interdictions semblent motivées par la crainte religieuse au moins autant que par le respect, aussi les examinerons-nous plus loin.

2° *Interdictions motivées par la morale.* — Le *stūpa* représente le Buddha et emprunte à celui-ci une personnalité qui rend justement compte des marques de respect qu'on témoigne à ce monument. Comme toute personne, le *stūpa* a le droit de possession, comme nous le verrons plus loin en détail, et ce droit doit être protégé. En fait, seuls les Mahāsāṅghika interdisent de prendre ou d'utiliser les biens du *stūpa* mais on peut supposer que les autres sectes avaient édicté des règlements semblables qui, pour une raison quelconque, ne nous sont pas parvenus. Il semble que le sentiment religieux, mêlé de respect, de dévotion et de crainte, ait empêché la plupart des gens de porter atteinte aux biens des *stūpa*. Ce furent surtout les envahisseurs barbares, comme les Huns et les Musulmans, qui détruisirent ces monuments et pillèrent leurs biens.

Détruire un *stūpa* est une faute grave (重罪), que ne peuvent commettre que des gens sans foi ni loi (非法, *adharma*) [T. 1425, p. 497 *c*]. C'en est une aussi d'utiliser (用) le *stūpa*, à des fins certainment profanes, sous le prétexte que le Bienheureux s'est débarrassé de la convoitise (*lobha*), de la haine (*dveṣa*) et de l'erreur (*moha*), autrement dit qu'ayant disparu définitivement dans le Nirvāṇa, il ne saurait avoir l'usage de ce monument [*Ibid.*, p. 498 *a*]. Ce même argument était présenté par les sectes qui, telles les Mahīśāsaka, les Vetullaka, les Caitika, les Pūrvaśaila et les Aparaśaila, soutenaient que le don au Buddha ou le culte rendu à un *stūpa* ne produisent pas de grands fruits. Notons cependant que ces sectes traitaient les monuments religieux avec respect. Utiliser les jardins des *stūpa*, leurs fleurs et leurs fruits en déclarant que le Buddha est dépourvu de concupiscence (*kāma*), de colère (*krodha*) et d'erreur (*moha*) est aussi une faute grave, comme de s'orner, sous le même prétexte, des offrandes déposées dans les niches et d'en éprouver du plaisir, d'utiliser les offrandes du séjour pur (精舍, monastère) déposées dans les *caitya*, les offrandes de parasols et de bannières ou

les offrandes de musique [*Ibid.*, p. 498 *a–c*]. Non seulement ce sont là des fautes qui transgressent la discipline monastique (越比尼罪, *vinaya-āpatti*) mais ce sont des actes (*karman*) dont la maturation (*vipāka*) est grave (*guru*). Le *Pi-nai-ye* illustre ce fait en racontant l'histoire d'un jeune homme qui, ayant dérobé des fleurs déposées en offrande à un *stūpa* pour les offrir à sa maîtresse, en fut châtié aussitôt par une éruption cutanée si grave que sa vie fut en danger et qu'il ne fut guéri qu'en faisant de riches offrandes au monument [T. 1464, p. 898 *a–b*].

Selon les Mahāsāṅghika, on ne peut ni laver, ni teindre, ni sécher des vêtements à l'intérieur de l'enceinte d'un *stūpa* [T. 1425, p. 498 *a*]. On ne peut ni laver de vêtements, ni se baigner, ni se laver les mains ou le visage, ni laver son bol à aumônes (*pātra*) dans les étangs des *stūpa*. Toutefois, on peut utiliser à volonté et sans commettre de faute l'eau qui s'écoule de l'extrémité inférieure (下頭流出處) des étangs, c'est-à-dire le trop-plein [*Ibid.*, p. 498 *b*]. Ici, l'obligation de ne pas employer les hiens du *stūpa* à des fins profanes et personnelles se mêle à celle de ne pas souiller ces biens, en l'occurrence l'eau des étangs, par des impuretés corporelles ou autres.

3° *Interdictions motivées par la pureté.* — On doit respecter la pureté du *stūpa* et ne pas la profaner par des souillures diverses. Celles-ci proviennent surtout du contact avec le corps humain, les animaux et les cadavres.

C'est pour éviter cette souillure due aux corps humains que les Mahāsāṅghika interdisaient, comme nous venons de le voir, de laver ou teindre des vêtements, de se baigner, de se laver les mains ou le visage ou de laver son bol dans l'enceinte du *stūpa* et surtout dans l'eau de ses étangs. Pour les mêmes raisons, on n'y doit ni cracher, ni pleurer (Mahāsāṅghika, T. 1425, p. 498 *a*; Dharmaguptaka, T. 1428, p. 958 *a* et *P'i-ni-mou king*, T. 1463, p. 838 *b*) ni même bâiller (Dharma guptaka et *P'i-ni-mou king, ibid.*), le souffle lui-même étant impur.

Le *P'i-ni-mou king* interdit de laisser échapper un vent dans l'enceinte d'un *stūpa* [T. 1463, p. 838 *a*]. Selon les Dharmaguptaka, on ne doit pas faire ses besoins, petits ou gros, devant le *stūpa* ou sur les quatre côtés de celui-ci, car un air malodorant pénétrerait dans le monument [T. 1428, p. 958 *a*]. De même, on ne doit pas se rendre aux lieux d'aisance en portant un reliquaire. De plus, il faut se laver après y être allé, avant de porter un reliquaire car, dit le Buddha, dans ces deux cas : « Il faut être pur pour le porter » [*Ibid.*, p. 957 *b*]. Les Dharmaguptaka et les Sarvāstivādin interdisent de mâcher les baguettes de saule servant à nettoyer les dents devant un *stūpa*, sur les quatre côtés ou sous le monument [T. 1428, p. 958 *a*; T. 1435, p. 299 *c*]. Si l'on s'asseoit sous le *stūpa* pour manger, prescrivent les Dharmaguptaka, il faut faire en sorte de ne pas salir le monument avec les miettes de nourriture, rassembler celles-ci près de ses jambes et les emporter ensuite [T. 1428, p. 958 *a*]. Nous avons vu plus haut que, selon les Mūlasar-vāstivādin, on ne doit pas faire de *stūpa* avec sa nourriture, puis le briser et le manger.

Comme il a été dit plus haut (B, V, 7), c'est pour éviter que les animaux ne souillent le *stūpa* en s'en approchant que les Mahāsāṅghika, les Dharmaguptaka et les Sarvāstivādin prescrivent la construction d'une barrière, d'un mur, d'une couverture ou d'abris pour les offrandes [T. 1425, p. 498 *a*; T. 1428, p. 956 *c* et 957 *c*; T. 1435, p. 351 *c*; T. 1452, p. 429 *c*]. Ces animaux impurs sont surtout la vache, le chien et les oiseaux, cités chacun deux fois, puis le mouton, le cheval, l'antilope et le singe. Si le caractère impur du chien est compréhensible, et expliqué par les Mahāsāṅghika qui l'accusent d'apporter auprès du *stūpa* des restes humains arrachés à un charnier voisin, celui des vaches et même des singes, animaux considérés comme sacrés par nombre d'Indiens et auxquels la porte des temples hindous est grande ouverte, suffit à montrer que, sur ce point du moins, les anciens Bouddhistes ne partageaient nullement les idées des autres Indiens.

La souillure causée par les cadavres ne fait l'objet d'interdictions que chez les Mahāsāṅghika et les Dharmaguptaka, encore les premiers se contentent-ils d'y faire allusion en accusant les chiens d'en être les agents, comme nous venons de le voir. Les Dharmaguptaka donnent à ce sujet davantage de détails. D'après eux, le Buddha a interdit de passer sous un *stūpa* (塔 下 過) en portant un cadavre humain, d'enterrer un cadavre sous un *stūpa*, d'incinérer un cadavre sous un *stūpa*, devant un *stūpa* ou sur les quatre côtés d'un *stūpa* car un air malodorant pénétrerait dans le monument. On ne doit pas non plus passer sous un *stūpa* en portant les vêtements ou la couche d'un homme mort, à moins qu'ils n'aient été purifiés et nettoyés par la fumée de l'encens [T. 1428, p. 958 *a*]. Le *P'i-ni-mou king* prescrit également, avant de pénétrer dans l'enceinte d'un *stūpa*, de nettoyer ces vêtements en les plongeant longtemps dans l'eau, en les lavant avec des cendres pures (純 灰) pour les purifier (令 淨), et en les enduisant de parfum d'*hi-me-k'ia* (*kemuka*, Colocasia antiquorum, ou *himaka*, Elacourtia Sapida?) [T. 1464, p. 828 *b*].

Il est encore d'autres causes d'impureté, mais dont le caractère est moins net, comme les sandales de cuir et les bottes ornées, ou encore le fait de monter sur un *stūpa* ou d'y déposer des offrandes. Les interdictions concernant les premières sont liées aux marques de respect, et celles qui se rapportent aux secondes sont en relation avec la crainte religieuse.

Si l'on ne trouve, dans les interdictions de cette sorte, aucun cas nettement caractérisé d'impureté rituelle, comme il y en a tant dans le culte hindou, on sent toutefois, à l'arrière-plan, ce souci de pureté religieuse qui est sous-jacent à tous les cultes du monde et qui, venu sans doute du fond de la préhistoire, se retrouve même chez l'homme moderne où il se confond avec les préoccupations d'hygiène.

4° *Interdictions motivées par la crainte religieuse.* — Certaines interdictions sont nettement motivées par la crainte religieuse, bien qu'elles puissent avoir conjointment d'autres raisons. Ce sont surtout les Dharmaguptaka qui font allusion à des sanctions surnaturelles différentes de celles qui découlent normalement de la maturation des actes.

Dans leur *Vinayapiṭaka*, le Buddha interdit aux moines de monter sur le *stūpa* (上塔上) pour y déposer des offrandes et de monter sur la barrière (上欄上) « pour les protéger de la colère de l'esprit (*yakṣa*) du *stūpa* » (護塔神瞋). Sans se référer au même motif, il leur interdit de même de monter sur les poteaux, sur les poteaux en ivoire, et sur les statues pour y déposer des offrandes. On ne peut monter sur le *stūpa*, etc., qu'en cas de nécessité et en se servant de moyens de préhension (? 有所取) [T. 1428, p. 956 *c*]. Les Mūlasarvāstivādin interdisent aussi de monter sur le *stūpa*, mais la raison invoquée est différente. Les brahmanes et les bourgeois (*gṛhapati*) s'indignent en effet de voir des moines monter sur le *stūpa* pour y déposer des offrandes et les blâment en déclarant : « Il est impur de monter dessus et de le fouler aux pieds » (不淨登躡). Le Buddha prescrit alors : « Il faut envoyer des hommes ordinaires » (俗人). S'il n'y a pas d'hommes ordinaires, il faut envoyer des gens « qui recherchent la paix » (求寂, dévôts laïques qui observent les dix commandements bouddhiques). S'il n'y a pas de gens « qui recherchent la paix », les moines doivent d'abord se laver les pieds, les purifier avec de l'eau chaude parfumée ou les enduire d'onguent parfumé puis, après avoir eu cette pensée : « Maintenant, je désire faire des offrandes au Grand Maître », monter sur le *stūpa* ... Si la forme du *stūpa* est haute et grande, il faut se servir de cordes attachées au-dessous des signes des roues pour l'escalader [T. 1452, p. 428 *c*]. Dans le même passage, les brahmanes et les bourgeois s'indignent de ce que les moines accrochent les guirlandes de fleurs à des chevilles fixées sur le *stūpa* et qui percent celui-ci, et le Buddha leur donne raison [*Ibid.*, p. 428 *b–c*]. Si donc les Mūlasarvāstivādin interdisent de monter sur le *stūpa* pour des raisons d'impureté, leur interdiction relative aux chevilles plantées dans le monument assimile celui-ci à un être vivant qui souffre quand on lui perce la peau, ce qui demande réparation.

Dans le *Vinayapiṭaka* des Dharmaguptaka, le Buddha énonce d'autres interdictions « pour protéger [les moines] de la colère de l'esprit du *stūpa* ». Il défend ainsi d'incinérer des cadavres sur les quatre faces du *stūpa*, à cause de l'air malodorant qui pénètre dans celui-ci, de porter les vêtements et la literie des cadavres sous le *stūpa*, de faire ses besoins sur les côtés de ce dernier, à cause de l'air malodorant [T. 1428, p. 958 *a*].

Comme dans le passage cité plus haut, le Buddha invoque la présence d'un esprit irritable dans le *stūpa*. Cet esprit est évidemment tout à fait distinct de celui du saint dont les reliques sont cachées dans le monument et qui, ayant disparu dans le Parinirvāṇa, ne peut ressentir aucunement les injures faites à son *stūpa*. Il s'agit de l'un de ces multiples génies de la nature, les *yakṣa*, qui résidaient dans les arbres, les rochers, les collines, etc. Notons qu'ici leur demeure n'est pas un produit de la nature mais une construction humaine. Le *yakṣa* en question en est, non seulement l'habitant, mais le gardien, rôle attribué par le Bouddhisme aux anciennes divinités indiennes. Ce fait apparaît beaucoup mieux dans un *Sūtra* tardif des Mahāsāṅghika, le *Śāriputraparipṛcchāsūtra*. Dans cet ouvrage, le Bodhisattva Maitreya, ému d'une persécution subie par le Bouddhisme, descend sur terre et demande au génie gardien du *stūpa* de la dent

du Buddha d'intervenir. Le génie, aidé des siens, se met aussitôt en campagne et anéantit l'armée et la famille du roi persécuteur [T. 1465, p. 900 *b*].

D'autres fois, quoique surnaturelle, la punition frappe le coupable sans qu'il y ait intervention d'un esprit quelconque. Il en est ainsi pour le jeune imprudent qui, dans le *Pi-nai-ye*, avait osé dérober des fleurs offertes à un *stūpa* pour les offrir à sa belle et qui faillit mourir d'une horrible et soudaine éruption cutanée [T. 1464, p. 898 *a–b*].

C'est aussi la crainte religieuse mêlée de respect qui empêche les laïcs et les moines de couper les cheveus du Buddha dans le *Vinayapiṭaka* des Dharmaguptaka et le *P'i-ni-mou king* [T. 1428, p. 957 *a*; T. 1463, p. 816 *c*]. Seul, un enfant de Rājagṛha, nommé Upāli, décide de couper les cheveux du Buddha « parce qu'il ne savait pas encore ce qu'il y avait à craindre » (無知未有所畏). Cette crainte ne provient du reste pas du Buddha lui-même, qui ne fait aucune difficulté pour accéder au désir de l'enfant Upāli et qui, semble-t-il même, est heureux de trouver enfin quelqu'un qui veuille bien se charger de cette opération nécessaire à sa tenue monastique. Notons en passant que ce récit est évidemment antérieur aux premières représentations du Buddha sous l'aspect humain, dans lesquelles le Bienheureux est toujours pourvu d'une abondante chevelure bouclée. On peut y voir un reflet de cette antique et quasi universelle croyance qui plaçait la force ou le principe vital d'un être, surtout d'un être exceptionnel, dans sa chevelure. On peut y voir aussi, et plus simplement, l'illustration de la crainte de porter atteinte à la personne même du Buddha en retranchant de son corps une parcelle quelconque.

La suite de ce même récit, chez les Dharmaguptaka, nous montre un prince nommé Gopāli qui demande une part des cheveux et de la barbe du Buddha comme talisman. Les ayant obtenus, il les emporte dans une expédition guerrière contre des rebelles et, évidemment, remporte la victoire. Il se confirme donc que les cheveux et la barbe du Buddha, comme toutes les reliques de toutes les religions, possèdent une force magique qui peut être utilisée efficacement, comme cela se fait dans l'Hindouisme, l'Islam, le Christianisme, etc., à des fins tout à fait profanes et même, comme dans le cas de cette expédition militaire, à des fins qui vont nettement à l'encontre des préceptes moraux les plus sacrés du Bouddhisme.

Comme nous le voyons, le culte rendu au *stūpa* emprunte non seulement des éléments formels aux cultes indiens antérieurs et non-bouddhiques, mais encore des idées qui sont souvent difficiles à concilier avec l'esprit de la doctrine prêchée par le Bienheureux.

E. Les biens du stūpa

Les Mahāsāṅghika et les Sarvāstivādin sont les seuls à donner des détails sur les biens du *stūpa*.

Nous avons vu plus haut que les premiers interdisaient d'utiliser le *stūpa*, les offrandes et l'eau de ses étangs à des fins personnelles et profanes. Les fleurs qui

poussent dans les jardins et les étangs du *stūpa* doivent être utilisées pour faire des guirlandes qui seront ensuite offertes au monument. Le surplus sera échangé contre de l'huile pour les lampes et des parfums qui seront, les uns et les autres, présentés en offrande au Buddha, ou bien placé dans les biens inépuisables (無盡物) du Buddha, c'est-à-dire du *stūpa* [T. 1425, p. 498 *b*]. Les fruits de ces jardins peuvent être donnés à la Communauté, selon le vœu du donateur. Les offrandes moyennes et supérieures sont destinées au *stūpa* du Buddha, les offrandes inférieures au *caitya* [*Ibid.*, p. 498 *b–c*].

La nourriture et la boisson offertes au *stūpa* doivent être consommées, selon les Dharmaguptaka, par ceux qui ont établi les plans et construit le monument, et aussi par les moines, les novices, les laïcs, etc. [T. 1428, p. 957 *a* et 957 *c*].

Les Sarvāstivādin parlent aussi des biens inépuisables du *stūpa*, qui sont inaliénables [T. 1435, p. 415 *c*]. Les biens qui sont donnés en offrande au *stūpa* ne peuvent être utilisés à d'autres fins. On ne doit pas les mélanger avec les biens de la Communauté des quatre directions, ni avec les biens consistant en nourriture, ni avec les biens à partager [*Ibid.*, p. 352 *b*]. Quand on construit ou répare un monastère, on doit d'abord s'occuper du *stūpa*, ensuite seulement des bâtiments monastiques [*Ibid.*, p. 249 *c*, 250 *c*, 251 *a*]. La construction et l'entretien des *stūpa* doivent être confiés à des hommes capables et qui ne négligent pas leur tâche [*Ibid.*, p. 416 *c*].

F. Les récits concernant le stūpa

Les données relatives à la construction et au culte du *stūpa* sont groupées en un seul récit chez les Mahāsāṅghika et les Mahīśāsaka, en trois récits qui se suivent chez les Dharmaguptaka. Elles sont également groupées en un seul récit dans le *Pi-nai-ye*. Par contre, chez les Sarvāstivādin et les Mūlasarvāstivādin et dans le *P'i-ni-mou king*, elles sont soit groupées en plusieurs récits, soit disséminées dans le texte en passages brefs, souvent même réduits à une phrase, à une simple allusion. Ces phrases détachées ne sont généralement reliées au contexte que d'une façon assez lâche, et les récits dans lesquels elles s'insèrent n'ont, le plus souvent, aucun rapport avec le *stūpa*. Au contraire, les récits plus étendus sont manifestement centrés sur ce genre de monument et méritent par conséquent de retenir notre attention. Aussi allons-nous les examiner et les comparer.

I. Le stupa du Buddha Kāśyapa

Cette histoire se présente en trois versions différentes chez les Mahāsāṅghika, les Mahīśāsaka et les Dharmaguptaka. Chez les deux premiers, elle constitue même l'unique récit consacré au *stūpa*. On la retrouve, simplifiée, dans le *Pi-nai-ye*, où elle sert également de cadre à la seule légende concernant le *stūpa*. Enfin, les Mūlasarvāstivādin en donnent à plusieurs reprises une version réduite à ses éléments essentiels.

1° *Mahāsāṅghika.* — [T. 1425, p. 497 *b*.] Le Buddha voyageait au pays de Kosala. Un brahmane qui labourait la terre, ayant vu le Bienheureux qui passait, arrêta ses vaches et rendit hommage au Buddha. Celui-ci fit alors un sourire mystérieux. Les moines, surpris, lui ayant demandé la raison de ce sourire, le Bienheureux leur dit : « Ce brahmane rend présentement hommage à deux Bhagavant ». Les moines lui demandèrent : « Quels sont ces deux Buddha? ». Il répondit : « Il me rend hommage à l'endroit où, sous son bâton, se trouve le *stūpa* du Buddha Kāśyapa ». Les moines désirant voir ce *stūpa*, le Buddha leur conseilla de demander au brahmane les mottes de terre qui composaient le terrain. Lorsque ceci leur eût été accordé, le Buddha fit apparaître (現出) le *stūpa* du Buddha Kāśyapa. Description rapide de ce *stūpa*. A cette vue, le brahmane déclara : « J'appartiens au clan (*gotra*) des Kāśyapa. Ce *stūpa* de Kāśyapa est à moi ». Alors, le Bienheureux construisit en ce lieu un *stūpa* pour le Buddha Kāśyapa. Les moines demandèrent ensuite l'autorisation de donner de la boue [497 *c*]. Le Bienheureux la leur accorda en prononçant une stance:

> « Cent mille fardeaux d'or pur
> « Pris, utilisés et transportés comme don,
> « Ne sont pas comparables à une seule boule de boue
> « Employée, avec une pensée de respect, à préparer le *stūpa* d'un Buddha. »

Le Bienheureux érigea lui-même le *stūpa* du Buddha Kāśyapa. Description de ce *stūpa*. Le Buddha dit : « Pour construire un *stūpa*, il faut faire comme cela ». Le *stūpa* étant achevé, il lui rendit hommage. Les moines lui demandèrent la permission d'en faire autant. Il la leur accorda en prononçant une stance :

> « Cent mille pièces d'or
> « Prises, utilisées et transportées comme don,
> « Ne sont pas comparables à une seule bonne pensée,
> « Avec laquelle, respectueusement, on rend hommage au *stūpa* d'un Buddha. »

Alors, les gens, ayant appris que le Buddha avait construit un *stūpa*, prirent des fleurs et des parfums et vinrent les offrir au Bienheureux. Celui-ci les déposa en offrande au *stūpa* de Kāśyapa. Les moines lui demandèrent l'autorisation d'en faire autant. Il la leur accorda en prononçant une stance :

> « Cent mille charretées d'or pur,
> « Prises, utilisées et transportées comme don,
> « Ne sont pas comparables à une seule bonne pensée
> « Qui, avec des fleurs et des parfums, constitue l'offrande à un *stūpa*. »

Puis, la Grande Communauté s'assembla comme un nuage Le Buddha dit à Śāriputra : « Expose la Loi (*dharma*) aux hommes » et prononça cette stance :

« Cent mille Jambudvīpa
« Pleins d'or pur et donnés
« Ne sont pas comparables à un seul don de la Loi
« A la suite duquel il se fait que l'on cultive la conduite [correcte]. »

Parmi ceux qui étaient assis là, il y en eut qui obtinrent la Voie (*mārga*). Le Buddha prononça cette stance :

« Cent mille éléments de monde (*lokadhātū*)
« Pleins d'or pur et donnés
« Ne sont pas comparables à un seul don de la Loi
« A la suite duquel on voit les Vérités (*satya*). »

Alors, le brahmane obtint une foi indestructible et, devant le *stūpa*, il apporta du riz cuit (*odana*) pour le Buddha et pour la Communauté. A ce moment, le roi [du Kosala] Prasenajit, ayant appris que le Bienheureux avait construit un *stūpa* pour le Buddha Kāśyapa, vint trouver le Bhagavant avec sept cents chars remplis de briques. Ayant salué avec respect le Buddha, il lui demanda l'autorisation d'agrandir le *stūpa*. Le Bienheureux la lui accorda en lui racontant l'histoire suivante. Autrefois lorsque le Buddha Kāśyapa entra dans le Parinirvāṇa, il y eut un roi nommé Ki-li (吉利, Kṛkin) qui désira construire un *stūpa* fait des sept joyaux. Il y eut alors un ministre qui, prévoyant que, dans l'avenir, des hommes impies détruiraient le monument, proposa au roi de recouvrir celui-ci d'une couverture d'or et d'argent [498 *a*]. Le roi suivit ce conseil. Lorsque, après sept ans, sept mois et sept jours, les travaux furent achevés, il fit offrande de fleurs et de parfums au *stūpa*. Le roi Prasenajit agrandit alors le monument, ce qui lui pris seulement sept mois et sept jours. Règles concernant la construction du *stūpa* et description de celui-ci. Règles concernant l'emplacement (*vastu*) du *stūpa*. Règles concernant les niches des *stūpa* : le roi Prasenajit demanda l'autorisation de construire des niches et le Buddha lui décrivit celles qu'édifia le roi Kṛkin pour le *stūpa* de Kāśyapa. Règles concernant les jardins : même cadre que précédemment [498 *b*]. Règles concernant les étangs : même cadre que précédemment. Règles concernant les *caitya* : même cadre que précédemment. Règles concernant les offrandes : à la demande des moines [498 *c*]. Règles concernant les offrandes de musique : à la demande du roi Prasenajit, même cadre que ci-dessus. Collecte des offrandes : à la demande des moines. Difficultés : Upāli demanda au Buddha quelle conduite tenir lorsque les biens du *stūpa* et ceux du Saṃgha sont menacés par des bandits.

2° *Mahīśāsaka*. — [T. 1421, p. 172 *a*.] Le Buddha se trouvait au pays de Kosala où il voyageait avec une troupe de 1.250 moines. Il parvint au village de brahmanes Tou-i (都夷, « Ville-blessé », Nagaraviddha, ou « Ville de même espèce », Nagaravidhā?). Il s'assit pour se reposer, sur le bord de la route, sous un arbre *śāla* (Vatica robusta) et fit un mystérieux sourire. Ānanda, surpris, lui

en demanda la raison et le Buddha lui raconta alors l'histoire suivante. Autrefois, il y avait un roi nommé Kin-mi (禁寐, Kimmi?). [Ici s'insère l'histoire de la princesse Mālinī et des dix songes prophétiques du roi que seul peut expliquer le Buddha Kāśyapa] [172 *c*]. Après le Parinirvāṇa du Buddha Kāśyapa, le roi éleva pour celui-ci un *stūpa* d'or et d'argent, qui maintenant se trouvait dans le sol. Le Buddha fit alors surgir ce *stūpa* qui apparut à la Communauté. Les reliques (*śarīra*) du corps de Kāśyapa étaient intactes. Le Buddha prit alors une boule de boue et prononça cette stance:

« Bien que l'on puisse [retirer] de la rivière Jambu
« Cent mille gains d'or et de joyaux
[173 *a*] « Ils ne sont pas comparables à une seule boule de boue
« Avec laquelle on élève un *stūpa* pour un Buddha. »

Le Buddha posa alors quatre boules de boue à l'endroit où le *stūpa* avait disparu et chacun des 1.250 moines en fit autant. Ce fut le premier *stūpa* élevé alors sur le territoire du Jambudvīpa. Suivent les instructions données par le Buddha au sujet de la construction et du culte du *stūpa*.

3° *Dharmaguptaka*. — [T. 1428, p. 958 *a*.] Le Buddha se trouvait au pays de Kosala, où il voyageait en compagnie de 1.250 moines. Près du village de brahmanes Tou-tseu (都子, Ville-enfant, Nagaraputra?), le Buddha sourit. Ananda, surpris, lui en demanda la raison [958 *b*]. Le Bienheureux lui raconta l'histoire suivante. Autrefois, quand le Buddha Kāśyapa eut atteint le Parinirvāṇa, il y eut un roi du pays de Ch'eu-p'i-k'ia-cheu (翅毗伽尸, Śibikāśi?) qui, en cet endroit, en sept ans, sept mois et sept jours, éleva un grand *stūpa* puis, pendant le même temps, lui offrit de grandes offrandes et donna du riz cuit à la Communauté. Le Buddha se rendit, tout près de là, dans un champ que labourait un cultivateur, y prit une boule de boue et revient la placer en ce lieu. Il prononça alors cette stance:

« Cent mille colliers,
« Tous en or de la rivière Jambu,
« Ne sont pas comparables à une seule boule de boue
« Avec laquelle on élève un *stūpa* à un Buddha. »

La même stance est reprise six fois, la quantité d'or variant seulement, en augmentant : cent mille boules d'or, charges d'or, brassées d'or, murs d'or, rochers d'or, montagnes d'or. Alors, les moines et les nonnes et les laïcs des deux sexes placèrent chacun une boule de boue à cet endroit et construisirent un grand *stūpa*. Le récit s'achève ici, les règles de construction et de culte des *stūpa* étant données dans deux autres récits, l'un concernant le *stūpa* de Śāriputra et de Maudgalyāyana [956 *c*-957 *a*] et l'autre le *stūpa* des cheveux du Buddha coupès par l'enfant Upāli [957 *a*-958 *a*].

4° *Pi-nai-ye.* — [T. 1464, p. 897 *b*.] Le Buddha résidait à Śrāvastī, au Jetavana. Le roi Prasenajit vint le voir et engagea une longue conversation avec lui [897 *c*]. Le Buddha accomplit le fameux miracle de Śrāvastī puis raconta au roi l'histoire suivante. Il y a très longtemps, quand les hommes vivaient 20.000 ans, le Buddha Kāśyapa apparut dans le monde. Lorsqu'il entra en Parinirvāṇa, il y avait un roi nommé Tchou-pi (執 鞞, « Qui tient un fourreau »), en son [sanskrit] P'ou-mi-fan (浦 迷 反, Bhūmivant?). Il apporta toutes sortes d'offrandes au bûcher funéraire et décida de construire un *stūpa* pour le Buddha Kāśyapa. Comme il ne savait comment l'édifier, les quatre rois dragons (*nāgarāja*) qui résidaient aux portes de la ville, prenant l'apparence de brahmanes, vinrent prêter leur concours au roi [898 *a*]. Ils lui offrirent les trésors de leurs résidences souterraines. Description du *stūpa* ainsi construit. Toutes les fleurs de la ville furent réquisitionnées par le roi pour être offertes au *stūpa*. Suit l'histoire du jeune amoureux qui vola ces fleurs et en fut cruellement puni [898 *a–b*].

5° *Mūlasarvāstivādin* — [T. 1451, p. 248 *a*.] Le Buddha résidait à Kapilavastu. Des nonnes vinrent l'interroger sur divers sujets, dont le Parinirvāṇa [249 *a*]. Le Buddha raconta l'histoire suivante. Jadis, quand les hommes vivaient vingt mille ans, le Buddha Kāśyapa [249 *b*] apparut en ce monde et résida à Vārāṇasī, au Ṛṣipatana, dans le Mṛgavana. Quand il entra dans le Parinirvāṇa, il y avait un roi nommé Ki-li-tchou (吉 利 枳, Kṛkin) qui fit des offrandes à Kāśyapa et lui éleva un *stūpa*. Description du *stūpa*, des offrandes et de la façon de les déposer.

[261 *c*] Le Buddha raconta l'histoire suivante. Dans le passé, quand les hommes vivaient vingt mille ans, le Buddha Kāśyapa apparut dans le monde et résida à Vārāṇasī, au Ṛṣipatana, dans le Mṛgavana. Dans cette ville, il y avait un roi nommé Ki-li-tcheu (訖 栗 枳, Kṛkin) qui gouvernait le monde par la Loi (*dharma*) et était un grand roi de la Loi (大 法 王, *mahādharmarājan*). Il confia l'éducation de ses trois fils au Buddha Kāśyapa. Quand celui-ci fut entré dans le Parinirvāṇa, le roi rendit hommage aux restes corporels du Buddha, les brûla sur un bûcher de santal qu'il éteignit avec du lait parfumé et recueillit les reliques dans une urne d'or et de joyaux. Il éleva un grand *stūpa* fait des quatre joyaux. Description du *stūpa*.

Comme on le voit, les trois premières versions sont étroitement apparentées et proviennent manifestement d'un même récit antérieur. Les deux versions des Mūlasarvāstivādin ont utilisé les éléments essentiels de la légende du roi Kṛkin et du *stūpa* du Buddha Kāśyapa, mais le cadre, le *nidāna*, est tout à fait différent : le roi Prasenajit n'intervient pas et le lieu où le Buddha raconte l'histoire n'est pas Śrāvastī. La version du *Pi-nai-ye* a conservé la partie du *nidāna* qui contient ces deux derniers éléments, mais la légende de Kṛkin, appelé du reste ici Bhūmivant, est fortement altérée par celle des quatre Nāgarājan.

Comparons les trois premières versions. Celles des Mahīśāsaka et des Dharmaguptaka sont plus proches l'une de l'autre que de celle des Mahāsāṅghika.

« Le Buddha voyageait au pays de Kosala. Il était accompagné de 1.250 moines (Mahīśāsaka, Dharmaguptaka) [détail postérieur]. Il passa près d'un

brahmane qui labourait la terre et le salua (Mahāsāṅghika); il s'arrêta près d'un village de brahmanes, Nagaraviddha ou Nagaravidhā (Mahīśāsaka), ou Nagaraputra (Dharmaguptaka) [le détail du laboureur revient plus loin chez ces derniers, mais ce n'est pas un brahmane; il est difficile de choisir entre les deux versions sur ce point, bien que le détail « brahmane » leùr soit commun; Nagaraviddha, Nagaravidhā et Nagaraputra doivent être identifiés à Nagarabindu/Nagaravinda qui était un village de brahmanes situé entre Śrāvastī, capitale du Kosala, et Vārāṇasī]. Le Buddha sourit. Les moines (Mahāsāṅghika) ou Ānanda (Mahīśāsaka et Dharmaguptaka) [précision postérieure] lui en demandent la raison. Le Buddha explique : en cet endroit se trouve le *stūpa* du Buddha Kāśyapa. Le roi Kimmi (?) ou le roi de Śibikāśī (?) a construit ce *stūpa* (Mahiśāsaka et Dharmaguptaka) [cette indication est donnée beaucoup plus loin par les Mahšāṅghika, avec le vrai nom du roi : Kṛkin]. Le Buddha fait surgir du sol le *stūpa* en question [les Dharmaguptaka ignorent ce détail]. Il prend une boule de boue et la pose sur le sol pour fonder un second *stūpa* sur l'emplacement du premier qui, entre temps, a disparu [chez les Mahāsāṅghika, le brahmane revendique le *stūpa* comme son bien, d'où apparemment la nécessité d'en construire un autre]. Il prononce la stance : « Cent mille parties d'or ne valent pas une seule boule de boue donnée pour élever un *stūpa* à un Buddha ». Les moines l'imitent après en avoir demandé la permission.

Voilà à quoi semble se réduire le récit commun. Notons, cependant, que les Mahāsāṅghika et le *Pi-nai-ye* mettent le Buddha en rapport avec le roi de Kosala, Prasenajit, à cette occasion. On peut donc se demander si ce détail faisait partie du récit primitif. Cette légende paraît antérieure à Aśoka. En effet, l'inscription de Nigali Sagar, datée de quatorze ans après le sacre de celui-ci, rapporte que ce roi agrandit du double le *stūpa* du Buddha Konkamana. Or, ce Buddha Konākamana était le second prédécesseur de Śākyamuni, Kāśyapa en étant le prédécesseur immédiat. Il semble que si Aśoka attribua le monument qu'il agrandit à Konākamana, et non à Kāśyapa comme il aurait dû le faire en bonne logique, c'est qu'une tradition répandue sous son règne plaçait le *stūpa* de ce dernier en un autre endroit, vraisemblablement au Kosala, aux alentours de Nagarabindu, sur la route de Śrāvastī à Bénarès, et non pas à Nigali Sagar, en plein Terai népalais, à 20 kilomètres au Nord de Rummindei. Un argument paraît appuyer notre point de vue. En effet, le *Vinayapiṭaka* des Mūlasarvāstivādin [T. 1451, p. 222 *c*] attribue à un roi légendaire nommé Aśoka (無憂), et curieusement homonyme du grand souverain indien du IIIe siècle avant notre ère, la construction du *stūpa* du Buddha Krakucchanda, dont il était contemporain. Or, ce Krakucchanda était le troisième prédécesseur de Śākyamuni, antérieur ainsi à Konākamana. Au fur et à mesure que l'on descend le cours du temps, on attribue donc à des Buddha plus anciens les légendes ou les monuments auxquels on se réfère.

Notons toutefois que, même si le récit commun est antérieur à Aśoka, les éléments concernant la construction et le culte rendu au *stūpa*, qui varient d'une version à l'autre, sont très probablement postérieurs à ce règne.

II. Le stūpa des cheveux du Buddha coupés par Upali

Ce récit ne se trouve que dans le *Vinayapiṭaka* des Dharmaguptaka et dans le *P'i-ni-mou king*, ouvrages qui sont, on le sait, étroitement apparentés.

1° *Dharmaguptaka.* — [T. 1428, p. 957 *a*.] Le Bienheureux résidait à Rājagṛha. Par révérence, personne n'osait raser les cheveux du Buddha. Seul, un petit enfant (小兒) nommé Upāli, qui ne savait pas encore ce qu'il y avait à craindre, voulut les raser. Ses parents demandèrent au Buddha de bien vouloir autoriser leur fils à procéder à cette opération. Le Bhagavant accepta sans difficulté, conseillant à Upāli de courber son corps. L'enfant commença à opérer. Les parents demandèrent de temps à autre si leur enfant agissait bien. Le Buddha lui reprocha successivement de trop courber son corps, puis de se tenir trop droit, de faire des inspirations trop grossières [957 *b*], puis des expirations trop grossières. Upāli suspendit alors son souffle et entra en quatrième méditation (*dhyāna*). Sur l'ordre du Bienheureux, Ānanda prit le rasoir dans la main de l'enfant et recueillit les cheveux dans un vieux vase. Le Buddha le reprit : « Il faut employer un vase neuf de telle et telle sorte ». Le fils de roi Kiu-p'ouo-li (瞿婆離, Gopāli), qui dirigeait une armée et se rendait dans l'Ouest pour soumettre des rebelles, demanda des cheveux du Buddha. Celui-ci les lui accorda et expliqua dans quel récipient il devait les déposer et comment il devait les transporter. Gopāli partit avec les cheveux, remporta la victoire et, rentré chez lui, éleva un *stūpa* pour ces reliques. C'est le *stūpa* qui fut construit quand le Bienheureux était encore en ce monde. Les moines demandèrent à emporter eux aussi des cheveux du Buddha. Celui-ci les y autorisa et leur donna les mêmes directives qu'à Gopāli, et bien d'autres encore.

2° *P'i-ni-mou king.* — [T. 1463, p. 816 *c*.] Le Buddha résidait à Rājagrha. Par révérence, personne n'osait couper les cheveux du Buddha, qui étaient longs. L'adolescent (童子) Upāli, étant venu rendre visite au Buddha avec ses parents, eut l'idée de couper les cheveux du Bhagavant et il lui en demanda l'autorisation. Celle-ci lui fut aussitôt accordée et Upāli commença à opérer. Ses parents demandèrent de temps à autre s'il agissait bien. Le Buddha lui reprocha successivement de se tenir trop près, puis de lever la tête, enfin de faire des expirations trop grossières. Alors, Upāli suspendit son souffle et entra dans la quatrième méditation. Sur l'ordre du Bhagavant, Ānanda prit le rasoir dans la main de l'adolescent. Celui-ci osa couper les cheveux du Tathāgata pour trois raisons : 1. à cause de son ignorance (愚癡, *moha*); 2° parce que la force surnaturelle du Tathāgata voulait qu'il obtienne la quatrième méditation; 3° parce qu'il [le Buddha] désirait que les êtres des générations suivantes sachent que couper les cheveux procure un grand mérite (*mahāpuṇya*). Le Buddha prescrivit ensuite de placer ces cheveux dans un vase neuf. Le fils de roi Kiu-pouo-lo (瞿波羅, Gopāla) ou Kiu-pouo (Gopa) demanda alors au Buddha ses cheveux pour les emporter chez lui et leur rendre un culte. Le Bhagavant l'y autorisa et lui

expliqua dans quelles sortes de récipient il fallait les placer et comment on devait les transporter. En chemin, Gopāla apprit que des bandits arrivaient. Sur la route, il construisit alors un grand *stūpa* pour les cheveux du Buddha et lui rendit hommage. C'est le *stūpa* dit des cheveux du Buddha.

Les deux versions ne diffèrent, on le voit, que par des détails secondaires. Cette histoire renferme plusieurs éléments intéressants. D'abord, le personnage principal est Upāli, dans son office de barbier, mais ce n'est pas le célèbre barbier de Kapilavastu, qui n'apparaît dans la légende bouddhique que sous l'aspect d'un adulte ayant à peu près l'âge du Buddha. Ici, Upāli est un enfant, tout au plus un adolescent, et il habite Rājagṛha, l'ancienne capitale du Magadha, à plus de 300 kilomètres au Sud-Est de Kapilavastu. Il semble bien que le détail de l'enfance du personnage, qui justifie son audace due à l'ignorance, soit antérieur à celui de son nom, lequel vient manifestement de sa fonction de barbier. Plus important est le fait qu'il s'agisse de raser la tête du Buddha, que l'iconographie représente toujours couverte d'une chevelure bouclée assez abondante. Ceci indique que notre récit n'a pas été influencé par les représentations figurées du Bhagavant et qu'il est donc vraisemblablement antérieur à celles-ci, c'est-à-dire au début de notre ère. Puisqu'il ne se trouve que dans deux ouvrages étroitement apparentés, il doit être tardif et dater du Iᵉʳ ou, tout au plus, du IIᵉ siècle avant Jésus-Christ. Notons du reste que les deux versions font clairement allusion aux mérites que l'on retire en rasant les cheveux du Buddha. Ainsi, quoique tout jeune, Upāli entre tout de suite dans la quatrième méditation. Il semble bien que l'auteur de cette histoire ait voulu lutter contre une vieille superstition relative aux cheveux des saints personnages.

III. Le stūpa des cheveux du Buddha construit par Anāthapiṇḍika

On ne rencontre ce récit que chez les Sarvāstivādin et les Mūlasarvāstivādin, où il joue un rôle prédominant, analogue à celui du *stūpa* du Buddha Kāśyapa chez les Mahāsāṅghika et les Mahīśāsaka. C'est la contrepartie de l'histoire précédente qui concerne, elle aussi, le *stūpa* élevé sur les cheveux du Buddha.

1° *Sarvāstivādin.* — [T. 1435, p. 351 *c*.] Le maître de maison Anāthapiṇḍika [qui habitait Śrāvastī], se rendit auprès du Buddha et, après l'avoir salué avec respect, lui demanda de menus objets auxquels il pourrait rendre un culte lorsque le Bienheureux serait absent car, dit-il, « j'ai toujours envie de regarder avec respect le Buddha ». Celui-ci lui donna alors des cheveux et des rognures d'ongle. Anāthapiṇḍika demanda aussitôt la permission — qu'il obtint — d'élever un *stūpa* sur ces reliques. Suit une longue liste de prescriptions concernant la construction, l'ornementation et le culte de ce monument, prescriptions amenées par les demandes du célèbre donateur.

Ce récit est repris, avec des variantes insignifiantes, dans une autre partie de

l'ouvrage [T. 1435, p. 415 *b–c*]. Seules, les prescriptions diffèrent, concernant d'autres détails de la construction, de l'ornementation et du culte des *stūpa*, et se présentant sous un aspect plus didactique.

2° *Mūlasarvāstivādin.* — [T. 1452, p. 429 *b*.] Le Buddha résidait à Śrāvastī. Le maître de maison Anāthapiṇḍika se rendit auprès de lui et lui demanda l'autorisation de construire un *stūpa* pour les cheveux et les ongles du Bienheureux, ce qui lui fut accordé. Suit une longue liste de prescriptions analogue à celle de la version précédente. Chaque paragraphe est précédé d'une stance (*gāthā*) qui en résume le contenu.

Les deux versions de ce récit très simple ne diffèrent guère que par deux détails : chez les Sarvāstivādin, le lieu de l'entrevue est passé sous silence, mais facile à deviner puisque le donateur est bien connu pour habiter Śrāvastī; les Mūlasarvāstivādin taisent la raison pour laquelle est construit le *stūpa*. Cette seconde version paraît plus tardive que l'autre, ce qui n'est pas surprenant.

Notons que ce récit suppose, comme le précédent, celui de l'enfant Upāli, que le Buddha se fait couper, et sans doute même raser, les cheveux. On peut donc le dater également d'avant notre ère, probablement du Iᵉʳ siècle. Beaucoup moins original que celui d'Upāli, il est placé, comme la plupart des histoires de ce genre, à Śrāvastī, et met en scène un personnage tout à fait classique, le célèbre et généreux donateur Anāthapiṇḍika, sans qu'on puisse deviner lequel de ces deux détails, le lieu ou le personnage, a déterminé l'autre.

IV. Récits divers

Les autres récits sont moins importants, soit qu'ils représentent des versions isolées, soit qu'ils soient réduits à quelques éléments, soit encore qu'ils n'aient qu'un rapport assez lointain avec la construction et le culte des *stūpa*. Nous les examinerons donc plus rapidement.

1° *Le stūpa de Śāriputra.* — Il y a deux versions, l'une dharmaguptaka, l'autre mūlasarvāstivādin.

[T. 1428, p. 956 *c*.] Quand Śāriputra et Maudgalyāyana furent entrés dans le Parinirvāṇa, il y eut un donateur qui voulut construire un *stūpa* pour eux. Le Buddha le lui permit et lui donna à cette occasion de nombreuses indications sur la façon de construire un *stūpa* et de lui rendre un culte.

[T. 1451, p. 291 *a*.] Le Buddha vint de Rājagrha à Śrāvastī. Ānanda offrit des fleurs et des parfums aux restes de Śāriputra. Ayant appris que celui-ci était entré en Parinirvāṇa, Anāthapiṇḍika alla demander à Ānanda comment rendre un culte à ses reliques. Ānanda et Anāthapiṇḍika se rendirent auprès du Buddha et lui demandèrent comment opérer. Celui-ci leur donna des instructions concernant le culte des reliques. [291 *b*]. D'autres personnes se joignirent à eux et rendirent hommage aux restes de Śāriputra. [291 *c*.] Le donateur [Anāthapiṇḍika, ou : les donateurs] demanda la permission de construire un

stūpa pour ces reliques. Le Buddha l'y autorisa et donna de nombreux détails sur la construction de ce genre de monument.

Comme on le voit, quoique partant d'une base commune, à savoir la mort de l'un des deux principaux disciples avant le Parinirvāṇa du Bhagavant, ces deux récits sont en fait indépendants.

2° *Le stūpa de l'Arhant anonyme.* — Il est donné par les seuls Sarvāstivādin. On peut le considérer comme apparenté au précédent. [T. 1435, p. 284 *b.*] Le Buddha résidait à Śrāvastī, quand un Arhant entra en Parinirvāṇa. Les moines pensèrent que, si on brûlait son corps, on tuerait les 84.000 vers qui s'y trouvaient comme dans tout corps humain. Ne sachant que faire, ils demandèrent conseil au Bhagavant. Celui-ci les rassura, disant que, lorsqu'un homme meurt, tous les vers parasites de son corps meurent aussi. Avec la permission du Buddha, ils brûlèrent alors le corps de l'Arhant, élevèrent un *stūpa* sur ses restes et lui présentèrent des offrandes.

3° *Le stūpa du Buddha Krakucchanda.* — Récit donné par les seuls Mūlasarvāstivādin. Il est copié sur le récit du *stūpa* de Kāśyapa et visiblement influencé par l'agrandissement du *stūpa* du Buddha Konākamana effectué sur l'ordre de l'empereur Aśoka, comme nous l'avons dit plus haut (F, I, *in fine*). [T. 1451, p. 222 *c.*] Le Buddha [qui résidait dans la capitale du Kosala, c'est-à-dire Śrāvastī] raconta aux moines l'histoire suivante. Jadis, quand les hommes vivaient 40.000 ans, le Buddha Krakucchanda apparut en ce monde. Quand il entra en Parinirvāṇa, il y avait un roi nommé Aśoka qui rendit hommage à ses reliques et construisit pour lui un *stūpa*. Description de ce monument.

4° *Le vol des fleurs offertes au stūpa.* — Cette histoire fait suite, dans le *Pi-nai-ye*, à celle du *stūpa* du Buddha Kāśyapa. [T. 1464, p. 898 *a.*] Il y avait alors un jeune bourgeois débauché dont la maîtresse avait donné l'ordre à sa servante de ne lui ouvrir que s'il apportait des fleurs. S'étant présenté sans fleurs, le jeune homme ne put obtenir que la domestique le laissât entrer. Or, le roi ayant fait porter toutes les fleurs de la ville au *stūpa* du Buddha Kāśyapa, le jeune débauché ne put en trouver aucune à acheter. Il alla donc en prendre, en abondance, sur les tables d'offrande du *stūpa* et, lorsqu'il se présenta, la nuit venue, à la porte de sa maîtresse, la servante le fit entrer. Dans la nuit, alors qu'il était couché à côté de sa belle, des abcès apparurent sur tout son corps. D'abord minuscules, ils grossirent rapidement jusqu'à devenir énormes. De son corps pourrissant s'écoulait un sang noir. Dégoûtée, la femme ordonna à sa servante de jeter le malade dans le canal. La domestique préféra aller chercher le père du jeune débauché. Celui-ci vint aussitôt avec quatre hommes et, ayant fait ramener son fils à la maison, appela d'habiles médecins. [898 *b.*] Ceux-ci ordonnèrent d'apporter neuf paires de santal tête de bœuf (*gośīrṣa*), trois paires devant servir à oindre le corps, trois à [oindre?] les vêtements (服) et trois à enfumer les vêtements (熏衣). Le père, effrayé du prix de ce traitement, fit appel pour l'aider à

ses parents et à ses amis. Bientôt, tout le santal fut rassemblé. Le jeune homme déclara alors que cette cure serait inefficace, car sa maladie était le châtiment d'une faute grave. Il confessa le vol des fleurs et demanda à être transporté aussitôt auprès du *stūpa* avec tout le santal afin que celuici fût offert en partie en réparation et en partie en hommage. Arrivé près du monument, il fit le vœu de ne plus renaître que parmi les dieux et les hommes, puis de devenir un Pratyekabuddha et d'obtenir le Parinirvāṇa. Aussitôt, ses abcès commencèrent à se résorber, et bientôt il put marcher et revenir chez ses parents par ses propres moyens. Il renaquit chez les dieux Trayastrimśa, puis chez les hommes et, dans ces deux destinées, chaque pore de sa peau exhalait le parfum du santal. Il devint enfin Pratyekabuddha et entra dans le Parinirvāṇa. Cinq cents ans après ce dernier événement, ses os n'étaient pas encore pourris, à cause du parfum surnaturel (非 世) qu'ils contenaient.

5° *Mālinī et les songes du roi Kṛkin*[13] — Cette histoire s'insère dans le récit concernant le *stūpa* du Buddha Kāśyapa qui est contenu dans le *Vinayapiṭaka* des Mahīśāsaka. [T. 1421, p. 172 *a*]. Dans le passé il y avait un roi nommé Kin-mi (Kimmi? en fait, Kṛkin; voir plus haut). Il y avait une femme qui, au moment de sa naissance, était couverte naturellement de guirlandes de fleurs d'or. Les brahmanes maîtres en l'art d'interpréter les signes (相 師), convoqués, lui donnèrent le nom de Mālinī (摩 梨 尼, de *mālā*, guirlande). Le roi en devint très épris et en fit sa favorite. Il fit rechercher les femmes nées dans son royaume le même jour qu'elle et les lui donna comme suivantes, au nombre de cinq cents. Sur le conseil de Kin-mi, Mālinī offrait chaque jour à cinq cents brahmanes des marmites de bouillon. Accompagnée de ses femmes, elle montait ensuite sur un char attelé de quatre chevaux et allait se promener dans les pares voisins de la capitale. Dans l'un de ceux-ci vivait alors le Buddha Kāśyapa. Mālinī, malgré l'avis de son cocher, pénétra dans ce parc et se rendit auprès du Buddha. Celui-ci lui prêcha la Loi et la convertit sans peine. Désormais, elle résolute de faire des offrandes de nourriture à Kāśyapa plutôt qu'aux cinq cents brahmanes [172 *b*]. Ceux-ci, l'ayant appris, résolurent de se venger. A ce moment, le roi Kin-mi eut onze songes. Le matin suivant, il consulta ses ministres à ce sujet et, sur leur conseil, convoqua les brahmanes maîtres en l'art d'interpréter les signes. Ceux-ci prétendirent que les songes étaient de mauvais augure et que, pour conjurer le sort menaçant, il fallait, sept jours plus tard, à un carrefour, sacrifier tel éléphant, tel cheval, tel grand ministre, tel grand brahmane, cinq cents taureaux, cinq cents buffles, cinq cents génisses, cinq cents veaux, cinq cents béliers, cinq cents brebis, enfin Mālinī et ses cinq cents parents. Le roi ajouta foi à leurs dires et donna des ordres pour préparer le sacrifice. Mise au courant de celui-ci, Mālinī reçut comme suprême faveur la satisfaction de tous ses désirs pendant les six jours qu'il lui restait à vivre. Le premier jour, accompagnée de tout le peuple de la ville, elle se rendit auprès du Buddha Kāśyapa qui prêcha si bien que la foule entière se convertit. Le lendemain, elle revint, avec tous les ministres du roi, le troisième jour avec tous les fils du roi, le quatrième avec toutes les épouses du

roi, le cinquième avec toutes les concubines du roi. Enfin, le sixième et dernier jour, elle se rendit auprès de Kāśyapa accompagnée du roi [172 *c*]. Comme tous ses sujets, Kin-mi fut converti au Bouddhisme. Il demanda alors au Buddha de lui expliquer ses onze songes. Kāśyapa lui répondit : « Ces onze sortes de songes concernent le futur, mais non le présent. Tu as vu en songe un petit arbre qui produisait des fleurs : dans l'avenir, un Buddha paraîtra en ce monde quand les hommes vivront cent ans, et il sera nommé Śākyamuni; à ce moment, dans leur trentième année, les hommes auront la tête blanche. Tu as vu en songe des fleurs qui devenaient des fruits : à ce moment, les hommes âgés de vingt ans engendreront des enfants. Tu as vu en songe des veaux qui labouraient et de grands bœufs qui demeuraient à les regarder : à ce moment, les enfants dirigeront les affaires de leur famille et leurs pères et mères n'auront plus d'autorité. Tu as vu en songe trois marmites dans lesquelles cuisait une bouillie de riz, le riz de chacune des marmites des deux côtés jaillissant séparément et entrant dans l'autre mutuellement, sans tomber dans la marmite du milieu : à ce moment, les riches se feront mutuellement des dons mais les pauvres n'obtiendront rien. Tu as vu en songe un chameau à deux têtes qui mangeait de l'herbe : à ce moment, le roi aura des ministres qui, lorsqu'ils auront mangé les revenus du roi, prendront encore les biens du peuple. Tu as vu en songe une jument qui, contrairement [à la nature], buvait le lait de son poulain : à ce moment, les mères, ayant marié leurs filles, contrairement [à la nature], chercheront auprès d'elles leur subsistance. Tu as vu en songe un bol d'or qui se mouvait dans l'espace : à ce moment, il pleuvra hors de saison et de plus il [ne pleuvra] pas partout. Tu as vu en songe un renard sauvage qui urinait dans un bol d'or : à ce moment, les seules richesses du peuple seront ses épouses, qu'il ne choisira plus dans son clan d'origine (本 姓, *mūlagotra*). Tu as vu en songe un grand singe qui était assis sur un lit d'or : à ce moment, le roi du pays emploiera un mode de gouvernement illégal (非 法, *adharma*, ou : impie), l'oppression et l'absence de la Voie [de la vertu]. Tu as vu en songe du santal tête de vache (*gośīrṣa*) qui était vendu au même prix que de l'herbe pourrie : à ce moment, les religieux (*śramaṇa*) de la semence (*bīja*) de Śākya, parce qu'ils désireront vivement accroître leur gain, prêcheront la Loi aux [laïcs] en vêtements blancs. Tu as vu en songe de l'eau, trouble en son milieu et pure sur ses quatre côtés : à ce moment, la Loi du Buddha sera déjà détruite dans le Pays du Milieu (*madhyadeśa*, bassin supérieur du Gange), mais, dans les pays frontières, elle sera au contraire prospère. Ô roi, il en est ainsi de tes onze songes. En ce qui concerne ta personne, ils ne comportent pas de présages ». Le roi ordonna alors qu'on laissât la vie aux victimes désignées pour le sacrifice et fit le vœu de perdre sa propre vie plutôt que de causer le meurtre d'un être vivant.

Ce récit est intéressant à plus d'un titre. A la légende bien connue qui met en rapport Mālinī et le roi Kṛkin avec le Buddha Kāśyapa, il a ajouté en effet un épisode dont les détails doivent retenir l'attention. Le sacrifice préconisé par les brahmanes est, certes, assez fantaisiste mais il se rapproche cependant de certains sacrifices védiques. Les Bouddhistes auteurs de ce récit voulaient surtout

insister sur la haine de leurs rivaux brahmaniques et sur l'horreur de leurs rites sanglants, auxquels la conversion du roi met fin. Les songes de Kin-mi, comme beaucoup de prophéties contenues dans les textes bouddhiques, concernent évidemment la région et surtout l'époque précise où cette histoire fut composée et, à ce titre, ils sont intéressants. Les deux premiers servent d'introduction et ne nous apprennent rien. Les sept suivants reflètent un état social anormal et corrompu, présenté sous un aspect paradoxal et choquant. Les enfants dirigent les affaires de la famille au lieu des parents : le respect familial disparaâit. Les riches s'engraissent mutuellement au détriment des pauvres : la générosité, vertu bouddhique insigne, disparaâit aussi. Les ministres ruinent le roi et pillent le peuple : l'autorité royale est bafouée par des serviteurs avides et sans scrupules. Les mères recherchent auprès de leurs filles mariées leur subsistance : il y a là une question de sociologie économique, et peut-être de droit, assez difficile à interpréter. Il pleut hors saison et en certaines régions seulement : les perturbations de l'ordre social entraînent évidemment des perturbations de l'ordre naturel. Les gens du peuple, appauvris, choisissent leurs épouses en dehors de leur clan d'origine : la vieille règle de l'endogamie n'est plus respectée, amenant une grave confusion ethnique dans ce pays où, à notre époque encore, cette règle est appliquée partout avec rigueur. Le roi gouverne par des moyens illégaux et immoraux, opprimant ses sujets : c'est l'opposé du souverain bouddhique idéal qu'avait voulu illustrer Aśoka; l'auteur pensait sans doute à l'un des rois obscurs des deux derniers siècles avant notre ère. Les deux derniers songes concernent la Communauté. Les moines ne prêchent la Loi que pour accroître leurs gains : bien souvent dans l'histoire du Bouddhisme, cette décadence de la Communauté sera dénoncée par des religieux austères. Disparue dans le Madhyadeśa où elle a vu le jour, sans doute à cause de la décadence du Saṅgha, la Loi du Buddha est au contraire prospère dans les pays frontières : le récit fait évidemment allusion à une situation postérieure à l'essor du Bouddhisme favorisé par Aśoka; d'autre part, l'auteur, qui avait conscience d'être bon Bouddhiste, devait résider en dehors du Madhyadeśa, sans doute dans le Nord-Ouest de l'Inde, comme le suggère l'allusion au chameau.

6° *La réparation des* stūpa *démolis.* — Récit donné par les seuls Sarvāstivādin [T. 1435, p. 416 *c*]. Règles concernant l'entretien des *stūpa* et des monastères. Dans le pays d'A-lo-p'i (阿羅毗, Ālavī), les *stūpa* et les monastères étaient démolis. Le Buddha, l'ayant appris, demanda à Ānanda la raison de ce fait. Son disciple lui répondit que, les moines du groupe des six (*ṣaḍvargīya*) voulant les réparer, les autres moines n'osaient le faire. Le Buddha prescrivit de charger d'autres moines de cette tâche par un acte (*karman*) régulier de la communauté. Les religieux ainsi désignés travaillèrent avec négligence et abandonnèrent leur tâche avant qu'elle ne fût terminée. Le Buddha conseilla alors de choisir des hommes plus zélés pour réparer les bâtiments religieux.

* * *

Bien qu'incorporées assez tard dans les divers *Vinayapiṭaka*, il semble bien que la plupart des données que nous venons d'examiner — la presque totalité, sans doute, si l'on met de côté le *Vinaya* des Mūlasarvāstivādin, très tardif — soient antérieures à notre ère et reflètent un état de choses datant des deux ou trois derniers siècles avant Jésus-Christ, c'est-à-dire de l'époque des *stūpa* de Bhārhut et de Sāñchī. Elles constituent donc les plus anciens renseignements philologiques qui nous soient parvenus au sujet des *stūpa*.

En ce qui concerne le monument lui-même, il semble que l'on puisse en retracer l'évolution à l'aide de ces données. D'abord simple tumulus funéraire en « boue », c'est-à-dire vraisemblablement en terre reposant sur un sol battu, de forme sensiblement hémisphérique, on le construit, vers l'époque d'Aśoka ou peu après, en briques, matériau plus durable. Il se charge alors peu à peu de nouveaux éléments : des niches ou des tables abritées pour déposer les offrandes; une barrière pour empêcher les animaux de souiller ses abords; des parasols plantés au sommet et remplacés plus tard par des parasols de pierre, durables et inamovibles, disposés les uns au-dessus des autres, enfilés sur un même mât central; des poteaux et des piliers supportant des statues d'animaux et des fleurs; un soubassement, peut-être en terrasse, permettant d'accomplir plus aisément la *pradakṣiṇā*; une construction sommitale mal définie dans sa fonction et dans sa forme; enfin, une couverture, des sanctuaires, des bois, des étangs, etc., plus tardifs et plus rares. La plupart de ces éléments sont expliqués par des considérations tout à fait pratiques et rationnelles, les autres ne reçoivent aucune justification mais aucun motif basé sur le symbolisme n'est jamais invoqué en ce qui les concerne. Cependant, dès cette lointaine époque, on tend nettement à personnaliser le *stūpa*, comme nous le verrons plus loin.

Le culte rendu au *stūpa* est imprégné d'idées religieuses étrangères à l'esprit de la doctrine bouddhique telle qu'elle apparaît dans les *Sūtrapiṭaka* et les *Abhidharmapiṭaka*. Le respect dû à la personne du Buddha ou du saint est transféré à ses reliques et, de là, au monument qui les contient. Notons tout de suite que ces reliques peuvent être aussi bien des cheveux ou des rognures d'ongles coupés sur la personne vivante que des fragments d'os ramassés sur le lieu de la crémation. Nous saisissons là un phénomène de participation qui est très courant dans l'histoire des religions et qui se base sur de très anciennes croyances magiques. Étrangères à l'esprit du Bouddhisme, celles-ci, provenant des milieux laïcs, se sont mêlées peu à peu au culte bouddhique des reliques. Celui-ci s'inspire en effet d'abord des marques de vénération que l'on adresse aux personnes vivantes : circumambulation par la droite, épaule droite et tête découvertes, salut des mains jointes, prosternation. Les offrandes sont les cadeaux que l'on présente aux grands personnages vivants, notamment aux rois, avec lesquels le Buddha est souvent identifié puisqu'il aurait pu devenir aussi bien un Roi à la Roue (*cakravartin rājan*) qu'un Tathāgata, et qui sont susceptibles de leur plaire et de leur faire honneur : fleurs, parfums, onguents, parasols, bannières, lampes, nourriture, boisson, musique, joyaux. Mais ces offrandes et ces marques de respect sont ambiguës car elles s'adressent non seulement aux rois humains et

aux personnes qui, comme les Buddha, leur sont assimilées, mais aussi aux rois divins, c'est-à-dire aux dieux comme Śakra, Brahma, et aux génies comme les Yakṣa et les Nāgarājan. Cela contribue à identifier, dans l'esprit des fidèles, les Buddha et les saints bouddhiques à ces dieux et à ces génies, et cela surtout lorsque la mort, le Parinirvāṇa, a conféré aux premiers l'invisibilité et le mystère des seconds. Dès lors, s'insèrent dans le culte des impératifs de pureté inspirés non seulement par la décence, les convenances et le respect, mais aussi par des raisons religieuses : le *stūpa*, comme les reliques, comme les saints personnages auxquels celles-ci ont appartenu, sont sacrés. Il n'est pas jusqu'aux interdictions motivées par la crainte religieuse qui, dès cette lointaine époque, ne s'introduisent dans le culte bouddhique. Comme on ne peut placer le foyer de cette crainte dans la personne des saints bouddhiques, qui ont renoncé, dès leur vivant, à toute colère et à toute haine et sont par conséquent incapables de se venger des impies — ils sont du reste suffisamment protégés par l'implacable loi de la rétribution des actes — on place ce foyer dans le génie qui réside dans le *stūpa* et est chargé de le garder, génie venu tout droit de la vieille religion populaire indienne.

D'autre part, la participation du *stūpa* au caractère sacré des reliques et de la personne du Buddha ou du saint tend à personnaliser le monument. Ce phénomène se manifeste non seulement sur le plan du culte, mais sur celui du droit, pourtant beaucoup moins suspect de subir des influences sentimentales. Comme la Communauté des moines, le *stūpa* a ses biens propres, son terrain nettement délimité, ses offrandes, son capital ou « biens inépuisables ». Cet ensemble est désigné tantôt sous le nom de « biens du *stūpa* » et tantôt sous celui de « biens du Buddha », ce qui montre nettement le sens de cette identification personnalisante. Dès avant notre ère, donc, le *stūpa* est plus que le symbole du Buddha, c'est le Buddha lui-même, c'est la partie de celui-ci qui demeure en ce monde après le Parinirvāṇa. Certes, aucun penseur du Bouddhisme ancien ne laissera même supposer qu'aucune parcelle de l'esprit du Bienheureux puisse demeurer dans ces reliques. Au contraire même, à chaque fois que le grave problème de la justification du culte fut posé sur le plan doctrinal, toutes les écoles furent d'accord pour proclamer sans ambiguïté que, le Tathāgata ayant définitivement et complètement disparu dans le Parinirvāṇa, le culte adressé à ses reliques et à ses *stūpa* n'était qu'un pur hommage sans objet réel et dont l'efficacité ne pouvait donc résider que dans la pensée pure et bonne qui l'accompagnait. Cependant, dans l'esprit des gens simples, il en était autrement et, comme ils éprouvaient le besoin naïf mais universel de reporter leur dévotion sur un objet concret, le *stūpa* était tout désigné pour devenir cet objet et cristalliser cette dévotion. A cette époque lointaine où l'on n'osait pas encore représenter le Buddha sous des traits humains — et ce fait a un arrière-goût de *tabou* religieux, analogue à celui qui empêchait les gens de Rājagṛha de couper les cheveux du Bhagavant — mais seulement par des images symboliques, empreintes de pied, trône, figuier pipal ou *stūpa*, tout le culte bouddhique se concentra sur les reliquaires monumentaux.

Cé culte né et développé dans le milieu laïc était devenu assez puissant, peu avant notre ère, pour toucher le milieu monastique lui-même, ou du moins une partie de celui-ci, et pour s'exprimer dans le Canon bouddhique de la plupart des écoles. Certes, nous voyons bien que cette intrusion rencontra une opposition assez forte, quoique variable, chez les moines puisque les Theravādin n'admirent jamais que les règles de ce culte figurassent dans le Canon pāli et que les Sarvāstivādin et, dans une certaine mesure, les Mūlasarvāstivādin les placèrent dans les parties les plus tardives de leurs *Vinayapiṭaka*. Il n'empêche que les moines, tout comme les laïcs — avec de rares restrictions, comme celle qui concerne les offrandes de musique — participent à ce culte et adoptent toutes les idées qui lui sont sous-jacentes. Nous sommes loin ici et des docteurs de l'Abhidharma qui niaient la valeur des offrandes présentées aux *stūpa* et des moines de la première génération à qui, si l'on en croit la légende, le Buddha mourant aurait ordonné de ne pas s'occuper du corps du Tathāgata, ses funérailles ne concernant que les laïcs. La mentalité que reflète ce culte semble proche, au contraire, de celle du Mahāyāna, de cette dévotion débordante, envahissante, qui multiplia ses objets de vénération, les Buddha et les Bodhisattva, et acheva la divinisation des sages, des saints et des héros du Bouddhisme antique.

L'intérêt des données fournies par les *Vinayapiṭaka* et examinées ci-dessus réside donc surtout en ce qu'elles nous montrent le culte bouddhique à une phase décisive de son développement, phase qui doit se placer dans les deux derniers siècles avant notre ère et dans laquelle aux anciens éléments du culte, réduits à des marques de respect symboliques, se mêlent nombre d'éléments nouveaux, étrangers à la doctrine bouddhique et même condamnés par elle, venus de la religion populaire antérieure au Bouddhisme. Le sévère et rigide monument du Dharma se lézarde sous l'effort lent mais continu de ces plantes vivaces nées du vieux terroir indien et que les antiques docteurs croyaient avoir déracinées à jamais. Dans quelques siècles, la forêt vierge aura recouvert et rongé les pierres disloquées.

Note additionnelle sur les règles concernant les *stūpa* dans les vinayapiṭaka

Mis à part les Theravādin et les Mūlasarvāstivādin qui interdisent de faire un *stūpa* avec la nourriture puis de le démolir et de le manger, les Dharmaguptaka sont les seuls à faire figurer les règles concernant les *stūpa* dans leurs *Prātimokṣa* et leurs *Vibhaṅga* des moines et des nonnes. Toutes ces règles sont des *śikṣākāraṇīya*, ce qui signifie qu'elles relèvent du simple savoir-vivre et que leur transgression n'entraîne qu'une peine légère. Elles sont groupées et forment les *śikṣākāraṇīya* 60 à 85[14]. Voici ces règles, qui figurent toutes, sauf une, dans le passage du *Kṣudrakavastu* qui concerne les *stūpa*[15] :

1° Ne pas s'arrêter pour passer la nuit dans le *stūpa* d'un Buddha, sauf pour le garder;

2° Ne pas cacher d'objets de valeur dans le *stūpa* d'un Buddha sauf pour le consolider;
3° Ne pas porter de sandales de cuir quand on entre dans le *stūpa* d'un Buddha;
4° Ne pas tenir à la main des sandales de cuir quand on entre dans le *stūpa* d'un Buddha;
5° Ne pas porter de sandales de cuir quand on tourne autour du *stūpa* d'un Buddha;
6° Ne pas porter de bottes ornées quand on entre dans le *stūpa* d'un Buddha;
7° Ne pas tenir à la main de bottes ornées quand on entre dans le *stūpa* d'un Buddha;
8° Ne pas s'asseoir pour manger sous le *stūpa* d'un Buddha en laissant des herbes et de la nourriture qui souillent le sol;
9° Ne pas faire passer un cadavre sous le *stūpa* d'un Buddha en le portant sur l'épaule;
10° Ne pas enterrer de cadavre sous le *stūpa* d'un Buddha;
11° Ne pas incinérer de cadavre sous le *stūpa* d'un Buddha;
12° Ne pas incinérer de cadavre devant le *stūpa* d'un Buddha;
13° Ne pas incinérer de cadavre sur les quatre côtés du *stūpa* d'un Buddha de sorte qu'un air malodorant y pénètre;
14° Ne pas passer sous le *stūpa* d'un Buddha en portant les vêtements et la literie d'un homme mort s'ils n'ont été lavés et purifiés par des parfums;
15° Ne pas faire ses besoins sous le *stūpa* d'un Buddha;
16° Ne pas faire ses besoins devant le *stūpa* d'un Buddha;
17° Ne pas faire ses besoins sur les quatre côtés du *stūpa* d'un Buddha de sorte qu'un air malodorant y pénètre;
18° Ne pas se rendre aux latrines en portant l'image d'un Buddha;
19° Ne pas mâcher de baguettes de saule [utilisées pour se nettoyer les dents] sous le *stūpa* d'un Buddha;
20° Ne pas mâcher de baguettes de saule devant le *stūpa* d'un Buddha;
21° Ne pas mâcher de baguettes de saule sur les quatre côtés du *stūpa* d'un Buddha;
22° Ne pas se moucher et cracher sous le *stūpa* d'un Buddha;
23° Ne pas se moucher et cracher devant le *stūpa* d'un Buddha;
24° Ne pas se moucher et cracher sur les quatre côtés du *stūpa* d'un Buddha;
25° Ne pas étendre les jambes devant le *stūpa* d'un Buddha;
26° Ne pas placer le *stūpa* d'un Buddha dans une pièce inférieure quand on demeure soi-même dans une pièce supérieure[16].

Les récits qui introduisent ces règles sont tous, sauf le dernier, identiques et conformes au modèle le plus classique du genre. Le Buddha réside à Śrāvastī, au Jetavana, dans le parc d'Anāthapiṇḍika. Les moines du groupe des six (*ṣaḍvargīya*) accomplissent telle action répréhensible. Des moines vertueux, l'ayant appris, les en blâment et rapportent le fait au Buddha. Celui-ci réunit la communauté, interroge les coupables, les blâme publiquement et énonce la règle

nouvelle qui, désormais, interdit d'agir comme les mauvais moines l'on fait. Il énumère les cas dans lesquels on est déclaré innocent : maladie, cas de force majeure, ignorance, folie, etc. Dans le dernier récit, celui qui introduit la règle 26, le Buddha voyage au pays de Kosala. Près du village de brahmanes Tou-tseu (都子, Ville-fils, Nagaraputra?), les moines du groupe des six, ayant placé le *stūpa* du Buddha dans une pièce inférieure, résident dans une pièce supérieure. Des moines vertueux, l'ayant appris, les en blâment, etc. Le cadre est ici emprunté au récit de la découverte du *stūpa* du Buddha Kāśyapa, sans doute parce que le cas examiné ne pouvait se produire que pendant un voyage, en passant la nuit dans une maison à étages, d'un modèle beaucoup plus fréquent chez les laïcs que chez les religieux.

Les récits étant tous identiques, sauf le dernier, la plupart des règles (4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23) en sont dépourvues, ce qui souligne le caractère artificiel de ces histoires. Même la règle 18, qui se distingue des autres par le fait qu'elle concerne l'image d'un Buddha, est donnée sans aucun commentaire.

Les seules règles formulées par les Theravādin et les Mūlasarvāstivādin au sujet du *stūpa* sont accompagnées du récit type donné plus haut et qui met en cause les moines du groupe des six résidant à Śrāvastī[17]. Celui des Mūlasarvāstivādin est le seul de tous à ajouter quelques éléments — en fait bien pauvres et de peu d'intérêt — qui seraient susceptibles d'éclairer le sens de la règle énoncée. Toutes les autres anecdotes sont désespérément vides d'explications ou ne font tout au plus que reprendre celles, bien minces, qui figurent déjà dans le *Kṣudrakavastu*.

Un certain nombre de ces règles sont manifestement inspirées par d'autres qui figurent dans tous les *Prātimokṣa* ou, du moins, dans la plupart d'entre eux. Ainsi, les règles 3 à 7 sont apparentées à celles qui interdisent de prêcher la Loi à un homme qui porte des sandales de cuir ou des socques de bois, les règles 15 à 18 à celles qui interdisent de faire ses besoins sur l'herbe naissante ou sur l'eau pure, les règles 22 à 24 à celles qui interdisent de cracher sur l'herbe naissante ou sur l'eau. D'autres rappellent des règles moins fréquentes ou les rappellent de plus loin. Par contre, les règles 1 et 2, 9 à 14, 19 à 21 et 26 ne s'apparentent à aucune autre.

Certaines d'entre elles se retrouvent dans d'autres écoles, qui les ont consignées dans des parties différentes de leurs *Vinayapiṭaka*. Ainsi, la règle 3 était adoptée aussi par les Mahāsāṇghika et les auteurs du *P'i-ni-mou king*, les règles 6 et 14 par ces derniers, les règles 19 à 21 par les Sarvāstivādin, les règles 22 à 24 par les Mahāsāṅghika et les auteurs du *P'i-ni-mou king*.

Par contre, on trouve dans le *Kṣudrakavastu* des Dharmaguptaka quelques interdictions qui auraient pu et même dû, semble-t-il, figurer dans leurs *Prātimokṣa* : ne pas garder la tête et l'épaule couvertes auprès d'un *stūpa*, ce qui rappelle les règles bien connues de toutes les écoles qui interdisent d'entrer ou de s'asseoir dans la maison d'un laïc avec la tête couverte; ne pas monter sur le *stūpa*; ne rien mettre sur le *stūpa*. Enfin, ils ignorent la seule règle connue des

Theravādin et des Mūlasarvāstivādin : ne pas disposer sa nourriture en forme de *stūpa*, puis briser et manger celle-ci.

Étant donné que, à l'exception des Mahāsāṅghika qui n'en comptent que 66 et des Theravādin qui n'en ont que 75, la plupart des sectes énumèrent environ 100 *śikṣākāraṇīya*, on pouvait se demander quelles sont les 26 règles qui, chez les Mahīśāsaka, les Sarvāstivādin, les Mūlasarvāstivādin et les Kāśyapīya, remplacent celles qui, chez les Dharmaguptaka, concernent le *stūpa* et l'image du Buddha. L'étude comparative des *śikṣākāraṇīya* prouve malheureusement qu'il est impossible de répondre avec précision à cette question tant la liste de ces règles est complexe et variable d'une secte à l'autre. A part une trentaine de règles qui sont communes à toutes les listes, les autres diffèrent de l'une à l'autre. Certes, un nombre appréciable de celles-ci ont été adoptées par plusieurs écoles mais ces similitudes d'opinion sont très capricieuses et parfois même inattendues, comme celles qui relient exclusivement, sur quatre points, les Theravādin et les Mūlasarvāstivādin. On peut noter, cependant, que les listes des Mahīśāsaka et des Sarvāstivādin sont presque identiques et que, dans de nombreux cas, ces deux sectes sont d'accord également avec les Mahāsāṅghika et les Dharmaguptaka. Par contre, les listes des Theravādin, des Mūlasarvāstivādin et des Kāśyapīya sont très aberrantes bien que montrant, dans quelques cas, des similitudes qui leur sont propres, ce qui est assez étrange étant donné leur séparation géographique. La liste des Mahāsāṅghika, la plus courte, paraît être aussi la plus archaïque puisque presque toutes les règles qui y figurent étaient adoptées aussi par la plupart des autres sectes ou s'apparentent étroitement à des règles de ce genre.

Pour répondre à la question posée ci-dessus, il semble que les *śikṣākāraṇīya* par lesquels les Mahīśāsaka et les Sarvāstīvādin remplacent ceux que les Dharmaguptaka ont consacrés au *stūpa* soient surtout le produit de la multiplication, pour des raisons de précision, de règles qui figuraient déjà sur les listes des Dharmaguptaka et des Mahāsāṅghika. Ainsi, la prescription de porter ses vêtements disposés de façon convenable devient : ne pas les porter trop en haut, ni trop en bas, ni de hauteur inégale, ni en forme de palme, ni en forme de trompe d'éléphant, ni en forme de mangue, ni en petits plis, ni en forme de tête de hache, etc. Il en est de même des règles à observer quand on entre et quand on s'assied dans la maison d'un laïc, qui se multiplient chez ces deux sectes et même dans les trois autres sans rien apporter, semble-t-il, d'essentiel dans ces nouveautés. Comme il est invraisemblable que les Dharmaguptaka aient abandonné 26 règles antérieurement admises pour les remplacer par celles qui concernent le *stūpa*, on peut penser que celles-ci furent consignées dans leurs *Prātimokṣa* à l'époque où les autres sectes du Nord complétèrent aussi leurs listes des *śikṣākāraṇīya*, quoique de façon différente, pour que chacune de celles-ci renferme environ cent articles. La liste des Dharmaguptaka est la seule qui contienne exactement ce nombre, les autres le dépassant généralement de quelques unités. La présence de la règle 18, qui concerne l'image du Buddha, permet de dater du début de notre ère la fixation à cent du nombre des

śikṣākāraṇīya chez les Dharmaguptaka et vraisemblablement, comme nous venons de le voir, dans les autres sectes du Nord de l'Inde également.

Remarquons que cette règle 18 est la seule qui ne figure pas aussi dans le passage du *Kṣudrakavastu* des Dharmaguptaka consacré au *stūpa* où elle n'aurait cependant pas été plus déplacée que parmi les *śikṣākāraṇīya* de cette catégorie. Ceci semble prouver que le passage en question est antérieur à notre ère, probablement de quelques années seulement, sous la forme que nous lui connaissons et que les *śikṣākāraṇīya* concernant le *stūpa* en ont été tirés un peu plus tard.

On peut classer les sectes dont nous possédons les *Vinayapiṭaka* selon l'intérêt canonique qu'elles portaient au *stūpa* et au culte qui lui était rendu.

Il y a tout d'abord les Theravādin, qui ne parlent guère du *stūpa* dans leur *Vinayapiṭaka*, à la seule exception de la double règle concernant la nourriture disposée en forme de *stūpa* et dont l'interprétation n'est pas claire (nourriture formant un dôme au-dessus du bol, donc en excès?). Pour eux, la construction et le culte du *stūpa* sont l'affaire des laïcs et non des moines.

Viennent ensuite les Sarvāstivādin, qui n'accordent qu'une très légère attention au *stūpa* dans leur *Śayanavastu* et leur *Kṣudrakavastu* et placent les règles de la construction et du culte de ce monument dans les parties les plus récentes et les moins canoniques de leur recueil, l'*Ekottaradharma* et la *Récitation des moines*. Ils n'ont donc commencé à leur accorder un certain intérêt que fort tard, très peu avant le début de notre ère semble-t-il.

Les Mūlasarvāstivādin ont sans doute opéré d'abord comme les Sarvāstivādin car, dans leur *Kṣudrakavastu*, les règles en question sont dispersées sous forme de quelques très brefs passages, réduits souvent même à quelques mots, et ne sont groupées de façon systématique et complète que dans leur *Nidānamātṛkā* qui est tardive.

Les Mahāsāṅghika, les Mahīśāsaka et les Dharmaguptaka ont accordé de bonne heure, vers le IIe siècle avant notre ère, une grande attention à la construction et au culte du *stūpa*, groupant les règles relatives à celui-ci dans leur *Kṣudrakavastu*, autour d'un récit ancien racontant la découverte par le Bhagavant du *stūpa* du Buddha Kāśyapa et l'érection d'un autre monument du même type sur l'emplacement de celui-ci. Bien entendu, pendant deux ou trois siècles, ce long passage fut remanié et reçut des additions diverses.

Enfin, les Dharmaguptaka ont cru bon d'ajouter à leurs *Prātimokṣa* et, par contre-coup, à leur *Bhikṣuvibhaṅga*, 26 règles mineures relatives au culte du *stūpa* vers le début de notre ère, donc à l'époque où les Sarvāstivādin et les Mūlasarvāstivādin commençaient seulement à attribuer de l'intérêt à cette question. Pour eux donc, le culte du *stūpa* était devenu un élément fort important de la vie des moines eux-mêmes.

Notons que l'on retrouve, sur ce point particulier, des affinités entre les Mahāsāṅghika, les Mahīśāsaka et les Dharmaguptaka analogues à celles qui existent entre ces trois sectes sur le plan doctrinal[18].

Notes

1 Taishō Issaikyō (= T.), n° 1421.
2 T. 1428.
3 T. 1425.
4 T. 1451.
5 T. 1452.
6 T. 1435.
7 T. 1464.
8 T. 1463.
9 Dans le *Vinayapiṭaka* des Dharmaguptaka (T. 1428, p. 958 *a*) on parle également et conjointement des rites d'inhumation et d'incinération.
10 La même interdiction est donnée par les Mahāsāṅghika à propos de la décoration des monastères (T. 1425, p. 496 *c*), donc, *a fortiori*, des *stūpa* et *caitya*.
11 Le mot *nāga* est notamment ambigu dans la liste donnée par les Mūlasarvāstivādin (T. 1452, p. 429 *c*), car les noms d'animaux qui le précèdent (lion, bœuf) conduisent à comprendre « éléphant », mais celui qui le suit (*garuḍa*) pousse à le traduire par « dragon »; les dragons sont, en effet, les adversaires des *garuḍa* selon une vieille légende indienne bien connue, non seulement de la tradition hindoue, mais aussi de la tradition bouddhique (T. 1, p. 127 *a*-129 *a*; T. 23, p. 288 *a*-290 *a*; T. 24, p. 332 *b*-336 *a*; T. 25, p. 387 *b*-390 *c*).
12 On peut supposer que l'assemblée quinquennale commençait le jour anniversaire du Parianirvāṇa.
13 On trouve le même récit dans l'*Ekottara-āgama* chinois (T. 125, p. 829 *b*-830 *b*; T. 146, 147, 148) et dans le *Jātaka* pāli, I, p. 334–343, mais il se rapporte au roi Prasenajit de Kosala et non pas au roi Kṛkin.
14 Édition de Taishô Issaikyô, n° 1428, p. 710 *b*-712 *b*; n° 1429, p. 1021 *b–c*; n° 1430, p. 1029 *b–c*.
15 N° 1428, p. 956 *c*-958 *b*.
16 Dans les deux *Prātimokṣa*, des variantes remplacent *stūpa* (塔) par « image » (像) d'un Buddha, mais dans le *Vibhaṅga*, comme dans le *Kṣudrakavastu*, dont le texte est plus développé, il s'agit bien d'un *stūpa*.
17 Règle 4 du *Samattiṃsa bhojanappaṭisamyutta* et règle 5 du *Sakkaccavagga* (*sekhiyakaraṇīya* 30 et 35) pour les Theravādin. Règle donnée p. 903 *a* de Taishô Issaikyô 1442.
18 A. Bareau, *Les sectes bouddhiques du Petit Véhicule*, EFEO, Saigon, 1955, pp. 290–295.

2

ASOKA AND BUDDHISM – A RE-EXAMINATION

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It is generally agreed that Asoka was among the great kings of the world, and indeed many would say that he was the most noble and altruistic ruler the world has known. Moreover, he is the only pre-Muslim ruler of India whose name is familiar to non-specialists in the West. His great fame in the English-speaking world seems to have been mainly due to H. G. Wells, whose *Outline of History* was almost compulsory reading for intelligent teen-agers in the 1920s and '30s, since it was the work of a progressive writer who then enjoyed great prestige, and was one of the earliest general histories of mankind to give reasonable coverage to the history of the civilizations of Asia. Wells emphasized Asoka as a ruler far ahead of his time, with a vision of perpetual peace throughout the world.[1]

In fact, when all is said, we know very little about Asoka's personality and motives. We have, admittedly, a number of fairly brief documents from his hand, but these are intended to project his public image, and do not show us the real man with the intimacy with which we know, for example, Akbar, thanks to the writings of both his friends and his critics, and to the accounts of foreign travelers. Our knowledge of Asoka, such as it is, depends on three main sources.

The first of these sources, and the most authoritative, is the series of inscriptions, the so-called Edicts of Asoka,[2] many of which are not really edicts at all. Some, indeed, are imperial commands, and seem to have a legislative character, but others are rather general pronouncements of policy and normative recommendations to his subjects, a form of propaganda representing an early form of the posters to be seen in almost every country in the world at the present time,

urging us to save energy, preserve the environment, and throw our litter into the trash-bin. These documents have the advantage that they form the only literature on Asoka which is strictly contemporary with the emperor himself, and they appear to represent his own words.

Our second source is the Theravāda tradition, preserved in the chronicles of Sri Lanka.[3] These texts record legends about Asoka's early life and his conversion to Buddhism, but their primary interest in Asoka is due to the fact that it was through his intervention that Buddhism was brought to the island and established itself there.

The third source is the *Aśokāvadāna*,[3] preserved in the Buddhist Sanskrit text *Divyāvadāna*[4] and also existing in Chinese versions. The various versions were studied by Przyluski, in whose remarkable monograph, *La légende de l'emperiur Açoka*,[5] it is shown that a cycle of stories about Asoka, on which this text is based, probably existed well before the Christian era and was compiled for the first time at Pāṭaliputra, in the Kukkuṭārāma Monastery, which had been much favored by the emperor.[6]

A few other sources, such as the records of Chinese pilgrims,[7] the *Rājataraṅginī* of Kalhaṇa,[8] and the *Purāṇas*,[9] tell us a little more about Asoka, but they are later than the main documents, and there is not much of importance that we can gather from them that is not to be found in the earlier sources.

One of the most remarkable features about these three sources, when we compare one with another, is that they have very little in common. The highest common factor of the three is merely that Asoka was a mighty Indian ruler, whose capital was Pāṭaliputra and who adopted a new and enlightened policy as a result of his conversion to Buddhism. Almost everything else is missing in one source or another. The Kaliṅga war, which, according to the 13th Rock Edict, was the main factor in Asoka's conversion to Buddhism, is not mentioned either in the Theravāda tradition or in the *Aśokāvadāna*, which, since it was transmitted mainly in Mahāyāna circles, we shall refer to as the Mahāyāna tradition, though it was not originally a Mahāyāna work. Asoka's own account of his remorse, incidentally, is so striking that it is hard to believe that it made no impression on the compilers of the stories in the two Buddhist traditions. Yet nothing like it is mentioned in either. This is particularly surprising in the case of the *Aśokāvadāna*, since this tradition grew up in northern India, at the time when Asoka's own inscriptions were still easily intelligible. One would expect the compilers of this cycle of legends to have recorded the story of the Kaliṅga war and Asoka's repentance and embroidered it with many supernatural incidents. Instead, they ignored it. From the point of view of the Mahāyāna source, Asoka was converted from his former evil ways not by the horrors of war, but by the patience under torture of a Buddhist monk.[10] The Theravāda tradition, on the other hand, ascribes his conversion to a seven year old *samaṇera* named Nigoha.[11] As further examples of unexpected omissions we may cite the absence of any reference to the Third Council at Pāṭaliputra in the Edicts or in the Mahāyāna tradition, together with the sequel of this Council, the sending out of

missionaries and the conversion of Sri Lanka. These events are mentioned only in the Theravāda tradition, while the rather discreditable account of Asoka's old age and death is found only in that of the Mahāyāna.[12]

Of the three sources it is obvious that the most important, at least from the point of view of the historian, is the first, the Edicts. We are justified in believing that these represent the words of Asoka himself. They do not necessarily reflect his inmost thoughts, but at least they show us what he wanted his subjects to believe about him. Moreover, from them we can gather something about the state of affairs in his empire, and his relations with Buddhism.

In the 1st Minor Rock Edict, which is generally thought to be the oldest of the series, Asoka tells us that he had openly embraced Buddhism some three and a half years previously, but that a year before he had "approached the *saṅgha*," and had exerted himself more strenuously in the faith, so that the gods, who for a long time had not associated with men, were now mixing freely with them.[13] The passage bristles with obscurities, and each version of the text differs somewhat from every other. At its face value this inscription shows us that Asoka was a man of his time, believing implicitly in the existence of supernatural beings who showed their satisfaction with men by descending to earth and manifesting themselves to them. On the other hand one is tempted to associate this passage, and a similar one in the 4th Rock Edict, which speaks of heavenly manifestations such as divine chariots and balls of fire,[14] with certain passages in the *Arthaśāstra*,[15] where the king is advised to allow himself to be seen associating with persons disguised as gods, and otherwise to produce fraudulent supernatural phenomena, in order to strengthen his prestige. We cannot be sure that Asoka did not himself descend to such cheap means of propaganda, but our overall impression of him is of an honest and sincere man, who, for all his love of *Dhamma*, would not propagate it by fraud, and we can only give him the benefit of the doubt.

This is believed to be Asoka's first propaganda pronouncement, and one asks why he did not begin more impressively and dramatically, telling his subjects at the outset about his remorse for the Kaliṅga war in the moving terms of the 13th Rock Edict. We can offer no answer to this question, except to suggest that either Asoka's feelings about *Dhamma* became even more intense and emotional as time went on, or his expertise as a propagandist increased with the years. Certainly the two Minor Rock Edicts cannot have been very effective as propaganda in favor of the new policy.

The main body of the series consists of the fourteen Major Rock Edicts, which show a rather different personality. Here Asoka is more peremptory and authoritarian in his commands, and at the same time more confident of the success of the policy of government by *Dhamma*. The very first edict commences with a stern command — "Here no living creature is to be slaughtered for sacrifice."[16] Thus Asoka's first concern appears to have been for *ahiṃsā* and vegetarianism. The figure of 100,000 animals, which he declares were formerly slaughtered daily for the palace kitchens, is quite incredible, unless it includes

such creatures as small fish, and this casts some doubt on the estimates in the 13th Rock Edict of the number of people affected by the Kaliṅga war.[17] A proneness to exaggeration in number and quantity is to be noticed in many ancient Indian sources, including the Buddhist scriptures.

In the 2nd Rock Edict Asoka records his social services in the form of the provision of medical aid for men and animals and improved facilities for travelers.[18] Here he first shows his ecumenical attitude, for he declares that these services have been inaugurated not only among his own subjects but also in the Tamil kingdoms of the South as far as Tambapaṃni (Sri Lanka?), and in the lands of the Greek king Antiochus and the neighbors of Antiochus. The passage suggests an early version of modern programs of aid to developing countries, and one wonders whether it was at all effective outside the limits of the Mauryan empire. This reference to Antiochus and his neighbors links up with the better known passage in the 13th Rock Edict,[19] where we are told that victories of *Dhamma* have already been won in the West. Through these victories of *Dhamma* Asoka had conquered Antiochus, Ptolemy, Antigonus, Magas and Alexander, all the most important kings of the Hellenistic world. As far as we can gather from the inscriptions he was ignorant of the very existence of China. In any case, if we consider the geopolitical condition of the world in the middle of the third century B.C., it is clear that Asoka was the most powerful ruler of his time, and he seems to have been well aware of the fact.

Nowhere in his edicts does Asoka use the word *cakravartin*, which suggests that in his day it was not very well known, or he would have certainly claimed to be such a charismatic ruler. The occurrence of this word in certain obviously late passages of the Pāli canon, such as the *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta* of the *Dīgha-ni-kāya*,[20] seems to be a post-Asokan reflection of Asoka's regime. In this *sutta* the ideal *cakravartin* follows a policy very like that of Asoka, and he conquers the world without fighting, as Asoka believed he was doing. We suggest that this text was composed soon after Asoka's reign, to warn his successors of the evil results which would follow if they abandoned his policy of *Dhamma*. In any case, the 2nd and 13th Rock Edicts give ample proof that Asoka had not abandoned his imperial ambitions, and that he looked upon himself as the moral emperor of the world.

On the other hand, sources from classical Europe give us no information on Asoka's conquests through *Dhamma*. It is noteworthy that in Greek and Latin texts there are several references to Asoka's grandfather Candragupta, under the name Sandrocottus,[21] and there is one to his father Bindusāra, under the otherwise unknown name Amitrochates,[22] but there are no references whatever to Asoka himself. If Asoka really sent missions to the courts of the ambitious Greek kings, urging them to accept his moral leadership and adopt the policy of *Dhamma*, they must have made so small an impression that no contemporary author thought fit to record them.

Yet, from the 13th Rock Edict, it is very clear that some kind of positive action was taken:

> And this is the victory that the *Devānaṃpiya* considers most important, namely victory through *Dhamma*. And that has indeed been won by the *Devānaṃpiya* here and on all the frontiers, even 600 *yojanas* distant, where are Antiochus the Greek king and the four kings beyond that Antiochus . . . [Here follow the four Greek names, and a list of peoples on Asoka's frontiers.] Even where the messagers of the *Devānaṃpiya* do not go, they hear of the *Devānaṃpiya*'s practice, ordinances and injunctions of *Dhamma*, and they follow *Dhamma*.[23]

Asoka could hardly have convinced himself of his own importance internationally unless a mission or missions of some kind had been sent to the Greek kings, and to other smaller kingdoms and tribes, and had presented documents in which Asoka explained his new policy and urged all rulers to follow it. Since there is no reference to such a mission in any classical source, and the very name of Asoka was apparently unknown in the West, we must presume that his attempts at winning over the Greek kings resulted in failure. Yet he states firmly and categorically that his missions have been successful. He has conquered Antiochus and the other Greek kings through *Dhamma*.

From this, assuming that at least one mission was actually sent, we are compelled to accept one of two assumptions. Either Asoka knew the real facts but concealed them from his subjects, giving the impression that the policy of *Dhamma* had been much more successful than was in fact the case; or the mission, inspired by sycophantic courtiers, gave a false account of its activities. Occasional travelers and envoys, coming to Pāṭaliputra from the West, might also have been persuaded to give false accounts of conditions in their homelands to the emperor, so that he imagined that he had brought about a striking change in the Hellenistic world. The whole tenor of the inscriptions gives the impression that Asoka was thoroughly honest and intensely sincere. Probably, therefore, he fully believed that his missions had been thoroughly successful. When, in the Separate Kaliṅga Edict,[24] he says *save munise pajā mama* we must not overlook the fact that the word *prajā* has political overtones, and, as well as meaning "children and descendants," may also mean "subjects." In this passage it is obvious that Asoka's primary meaning is "All men are my children," but the secondary meaning should not be forgotten. He seems to have seen himself as the *paterfamilias* of an immense extended family, comprising every creature on earth.

Other examples of Asoka's exaggerated confidence in the success of his new policy are not hard to find. We are told that Asoka's descendents would continue to promote the policy of *Dhamma* even up to the end of the *kalpa*.[25] The conviction that the policy of *Dhamma* had changed the morals and conduct of the world seems even stronger in the Pillar Edicts, promulgated in the 26th and 27th years of Asoka's reign. In the 7th Pillar Edict he looks back on his career as a reformer with considerable complacency. His officers are all busily enforcing the new policy and the people are following it obediently. It will last for as long as the moon and sun.[26]

The most remarkable evidence of Asoka's complacency comes from the brief Kandahar Edicts in Greek and Aramaic, which tell us explicitly that the fishermen of the king have ceased to fish and the hunters have stopped hunting, and all goes well throughout the kingdom.[27] The fact that the inscription opens with the statement that Asoka commenced issuing his edicts when he had been consecrated for ten years might give the impression that this is an early inscription, but we believe that it is later than the Pillar Edicts, and belongs to the last years of his reign, for in the 5th Pillar Edict Asoka bans only the killing of certain species of animals and forbids hunting and fishing only on a few days of the year. The fishermen and hunters referred to in the Kandahar Edict are unlikely to be gamekeepers and beaters in the royal hunting parks and reserved forests, but rather professional hunters and fishers who ranged the forested and waste land (*vivīta*) and were permitted to hunt or fish in return for a share of their bag or catch. All the forest and waste of the kingdom was in theory the property of the king, and the fishermen and hunters of the king referred to in the Kandahar Inscription probably included all the professional hunters and fishermen in the kingdom, who were in much the same theoretical position as the share-croppers who worked much of the royal demesne.[28] Thus Asoka believed that the fishermen and hunters of his kingdom had accepted his new policy, either voluntarily or by compulsion, and had given up their old professions. This is intrinsically very unlikely, and most of his subjects must have known that hunting and fishing were still going on. In fact Asoka proclaims to the world not so much the success of his policy as his own naïveté and credulity. The inscription suggests that, now an old and tired man, he had fallen into the hands of crooked courtiers and counsellors who deliberately concealed the truth from him. He had lost almost all contact with reality and had no clear idea about the true state of his kingdom.

The Minor Pillar Edicts, must be, with the Kandahar Edict, among Asoka's final pronouncements, since many of them occur below the main series of Major Pillar Edicts. They confirm the Mahāyāna tradition that towards the end of his reign Asoka became even more deeply interested in the affairs of the Buddhist *saṅgha*. Among these short inscriptions there occurs an ordinance, in three surviving versions (Sarnath, Kosambi and Sanchi),[29] stating that the *saṅgha* should remain united for as long as the sun and moon endure, and that if any monk or nun should try to divide it, the local *mahāmattas* are to ensure that he or she is expelled from the Order. It is noteworthy that here it is the government officials, and not the senior monks, who are instructed to root out heretics.

Asoka's last surviving public pronouncement may have been the so-called Queen's Edict, which occurs only once, at the bottom of the inscribed portion of the Allahabad Pillar. In it Asoka instructs the *mahāmattas* to ensure that all religious gifts made by Kāruvāki, the second queen and mother of Tivara, are recorded to her credit.[30] One wonders what can have been the motive in engraving such a trivial pronouncement, which had no direct relation to the policy of *Dhamma* at all. In any case, it is clear that Kāruvāki, no doubt annoyed because

her benevolence had not been duly recognized, had considerable influence with the emperor. The implications of this edict are to some extent confirmed by Mahāyāna tradition, which tells us that in his later years Asoka fell under the influence of his second queen, who tried to destroy the sacred Bodhi tree at Gaya and who brought about the blinding of his favorite son Kunāla. The name of this queen, Tiṣyarakṣitā, has nothing in common with that of the queen of the edict, but it is possible that they are the same, since in ancient India members of royal families were known by various appellations.[32] In any case, two of our main sources agree on two important points: (1) that Asoka's interest in the *saṅgha* increased as time went on and (2) that in his later life he came much under the influence of his womenfolk.

The last story about Asoka in the Mahāyāna tradition tells us that at the end of his reign he became so involved with the Buddhist *saṅgha* and squandered so much wealth upon it that he was virtually deposed in a palace coup.[33] We have no definite evidence to confirm this, except that Asoka's inscriptions suggest that towards the end of his reign he played a much more direct part in the affairs of the *saṅgha* than he had formerly. The story in the *Aśokāvadāna*, though obviously worked over to bring out the Buddhist moral of the vanity and transience of earthly glory, is not intrinsically improbable. Moreover, especially if we agree with Przyluski on the antiquity of the cycle of stories,[34] it is hardly likely that such a tale would have arisen if it had been common knowledge that Asoka had died while in full command of his kingdom.

Thus, if we are compelled to give a general judgement on Asoka and his regime, we must conclude that, though he was a very good man, he was not altogether a good king. Carried away by his new faith he increasingly lost touch with reality, until ultimately he was dethroned, and the great Mauryan empire broke up, largely as a result of his intensely moral but thoroughly unrealistic convictions. In India itself, except in Buddhist circles, he was soon forgotten, a mere name in the Purāṇic king-lists. The strong central control of the Mauryas soon gave way to quasi-feudal conditions under the Śuṅgas, and regimes of this type, in various forms, were usual for the next two thousand years. Asoka almost passed into oblivion until the nineteenth century, when his inscriptions were deciphered.

Nevertheless, it is certain that, despite his failures, Asoka did have an important effect on later generations, mainly thanks to his support for Buddhism. Although literary evidence may suggest the contrary, it seems that before Asoka Buddhism was a comparatively unimportant feature in the religious life of India. Little or no faith can be placed on the accounts in the Buddhist scriptures of very large numbers of monks, nuns and lay followers during the Buddha's lifetime. Between the *parinirvāṇa* and the time of Asoka we have but scanty evidence of what was happening to Buddhism. Archaeological evidence is virtually lacking, but after Asoka it is abundant. There is a tradition, maintained by both Theravāda and Mahāyāna, of a council of Vesāli one hundred years after the Master's death. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*,[35] generally agreed to be pre-Mauryan,

contains passages which suggest some contact with Buddhist ideas. Possible influence is even stronger in the case of the *Maitrī Upaniṣad*,[36] but that text is evidently the latest of the thirteen early Upaniṣads, and we believe it to be post-Mauryan.[37] Other than these, there is little positive evidence as to the state of Buddhism before Asoka.

One of our main reasons for believing that Buddhism was a comparatively minor factor in the religious life of India before Asoka is that the older Jaina scriptures, though they may mention Buddhism very occasionally, do not appear to look on the Buddha and Buddhism as serious rivals to Mahāvīra and Jainism. From the point of view of the Jainas their most dangerous rivals were Gosāla and the Ājīvikas. In the Pāli texts the situation is similar. References to Mahāvīra (under the name Niggantha Nātaputta) and Jainism certainly occur, but they are considerably fewer than those to Gosāla and the Ājīvikas. These facts suggest that in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. the Ājīvikas were the strongest of the *śramaṇa* sects.

Further indications of the comparative insignificance of Buddhism before Asoka can be found in the stories of the *Aśokāvadāna* itself, confirmed by other sources. After his conversion Asoka is said to have broken open seven of the *stūpas* containing the ashes of the Buddha, to have divided the fragments of bone and ash into 84,000 minute portions, and to have sent these to all parts of his empire, to be interred under new *stūpas*.[38] *Stūpas* said to have been founded by Asoka were numerous in the days of the Chinese travelers, but they mention few pre-Asokan *stūpas*, except for those traditionally raised in the Tarai area by the tribes who shared the ashes of the Buddha's funeral pyre. It seems that the cult of the *stūpa* in Buddhism began in this area, the scene of the Master's birth and death. Evidently even before the reign of Asoka the Buddhists were strong enough here to take over the *stūpa* of some long-dead saint or hero, whom they identified as a former Buddha, Konāgamana.[39]

Our impression is that before Asoka this was the main center of Buddhism, and that elsewhere it may have been comparatively uninfluential; but no doubt monasteries and Buddhist communities already existed in the sacred sites of Gaya and Sarnath and in the larger centers of population. We may assume that with the development of Pāṭaliputra as a large city, perhaps then the largest city in the world, a Buddhist monastery or two were established there, as the traditions confirm. It seems, reading between the lines of the various accounts, that the monks of the local monasteries gained the confidence of the young Asoka, and gradually attracted him towards Buddhism. The Kaliṅga war finalized his conversion.

It is not wholly clear what form of Buddhism Asoka believed in, but it is evident that it was different from any form existing nowadays. It was certainly not the modern rationalist Buddhism of intellectual Theravāda, neither was it the quasi-theistic Buddhism of Mahāyāna and Tantrism. We have no evidence, moreover, in the inscriptions of even rudimentary forms of the profound Mahāyāna metaphysical systems of later times; but Asoka's reference to his

"going forth to Sambodhi" in the 8th Rock Edict may indicate the very beginning of the concept of the *bodhisattva*.[40] The inscriptions contain no reference whatever to *nirvāṇa*, and we must conclude that, if the monks had already elaborated the doctrine of *nirvāṇa*, either Asoka did not know of it or, more likely, he considered it too abstruse to mention in his public pronouncements.

The Bairat Edict, the only one specifically addressed to the *saṅgha*, shows that the formula of the Triple Jewel (*triratna*) was already used by the Buddhists as a confession of faith.[41] The same document shows that some kind of a canon already existed, though the identification of the seven scriptural passages listed is far from certain. Moreover it is evident that, at the time of the promulgation of this edict, Asoka's attitude towards the Buddhist Order was thoroughly erastian. After greeting the monks and expressing his faith in the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the *saṅgha*, Asoka declares: "Whatever, sirs, has been spoken by the Lord Buddha was well said, but I now propose to state passages indicated by me, in order that the true *Dhamma* may last long." Then, after enumerating the seven chosen passages, he goes on to say that he desires that as many monks, nuns and layfolk as possible should listen to these passages and meditate upon them. No doubt in choosing the seven passages Asoka was advised by a senior monk, but that a mere layman should have the temerity to instruct the Buddhist clergy on what texts they should study cannot but have aroused irritation. Probably few monks acted on Asoka's instructions in this matter.

The Minor Pillar Edicts, ordering the *mahāmattas* to ensure that dissident or heretical monks should be expelled from their monasteries, have already been mentioned. They give even stronger evidence of Asoka's erastianism. The Sarnath version of this edict seems to show that a copy of it was sent to every significant Buddhist monastery in the land, and that the *mahāmattas* were required to attend the monastic ritual on each *uposatha* day, in order to ensure that the king's orders were understood and carried out. Asoka's precedent in making himself the virtual head of the church was followed by many Buddhist kings of later times. Indeed, Buddhism has flourished most vigorously under those kings who have taken most interest in it. Buddhist kings, following the advice of senior monks, have in the past regularly acted as arbiters of orthodoxy. These three Minor Pillar Edicts are the ancestors of the *kätikāvaṭas* of the pious rulers of Sri Lanka, who from time to time took it upon themselves to purge the *saṅgha* of heresies and malpractices.

Though Asoka's noble vision of a world at peace, with himself and his descendants as its moral leaders, never materialized, it is wrong to suggest that his regime had no effect whatever on later history. For over twenty years the people of India were subjected to constant propaganda in favor of non-violence, vegetarianism, and moral behavior. This cannot have been completely without effect. When we compare the India described by Megasthenes with that of Fa-hsien, we note that striking changes took place in the seven hundred years dividing the days of the two travelers. In the time of Candra Gupta II, if we are to believe Fa-hsien,[41] the death penalty had been abolished and vegetarianism was

almost universal, at least among the higher classes. The urbanity and mildness of Gupta administration contrasts strikingly with the stern efficiency of the Mauryas, as described by Megasthenes. Asoka's reforms must have been partly responsible for these changes.

Moreover, even though Asoka's missionary activities in the realms of the five Greek kings were apparently completely futile, the numerous missionary monks listed in the Theravāda tradition, as going forth to various lands and regions after the Council of Pāṭaliputra, may have had some success; and we may be sure that at least one of the victories of *Dhamma* that Asoka claimed to have won was in a sense real and lasting. There is ample confirmation, mainly of an archaeological nature, of the statements of the chronicles of Sri Lanka that the island was converted to Buddhism in the time of Asoka. Whether or not the main missionary campaign was led by Asoka's son Mahinda, the fact that Buddhism virtually began in Sri Lanka in the latter part of the reign of Asoka is certain. Through Asoka a new faith, after over two centuries of preparation, commenced its long and successful career as one of the great religions of the world.

* Editor's note: Owing to a broken arm, Prof. Basham was unable to complete the footnotes to his address, which, in any case, are not essential to his discussion.

3

THE DATE OF THE BUDDHA RECONSIDERED

Heinz Bechert

Source: *Indologica Taurinensia* 10 (1982): 29–36.

The date of the Buddha's Nirvāṇa is supposed to be fairly certain. In all handbooks of Indian history, world history, history of religions etc. we find statements like the relevant sentence in the *Cambridge History of India*: 'There is now a general agreement among scholars that Buddha died within a few years of 480 B.C.'[1]. If this date is correct, it is the earliest, rather accurately known date in Indian history.

It must be mentioned, however, that Prof. Lamotte does not agree with this communis opinio in his *Histoire du bouddhisme indien*. He says: 'Selon une tradition unanime le Bouddha vécut quatre-vingts ans, mais la date de son Nirvāṇa, c'est-à-dire de sa mort, n'est pas encore établie avec certitude ... Deux chronologies sont attestées dans les anciens documents: la chronologie longue qui place le Nirvāṇa 218 ans avant le sacre d'Aśoka (c. 486 a.C.), la chronologie courte qui situe le même événement 100 ans avant le sacre (c. 368 a.C.) ... L'historien moderne peut opter indifféremment pour la chronologie longue ou la chronologie courte ...'[2].

The so-called short chronology is attested by Indian sources and their Chinese and Tibetan translations, while the so-called long chronology is based on the testimony of the Sinhalese chronicles. Henceforth, I shall call them the Indian and the Ceylonese chronology respectively. There is no dispute any more among scholars that the tradition of the so-called 'dotted record' known from Chinese sources originated from Sri Lanka and, therefore, it can not be considered an independent source[3]. A few, rather late, sources refer to other dates of the Nirvāṇa, e.g. 116 years before Aśoka's anointment, i.e. 384 B.C., or 565 B.C., 665 B.C., 865 B.C., 955 B.C., 1247 B.C. etc. up to 2100 B.C.[4]. We can safely ignore these late traditions for our deliberations.

The best survey of the arguments which led scholars into the belief that the calculation of the date of the Nirvāṇa must be based on the Ceylonese chronology is found in the contribution *La date du Nirvāṇa* by André Bareau in *Journal asiatique*, vol. 241 (1953), pp. 27–62. We must, however, keep in mind

that the date of the Nirvāṇa as calculated by the Ceylonese chronology is by no means 480, 478 or 486 B.C., but it is 544 or 543 B.C. It is well known that the date of Aśoka is miscalculated in Ceylonese chronology, and that the miscalculation of about 62–70 years has to be corrected if we want to use this chronology for the calculation of the date of the Nirvāṇa. The resulting modern chronology based on the corrected date of Aśoka is henceforth called the 'corrected Ceylonese chronology'. As far as the miscalculation of Aśoka's date in the Ceylonese chronicles is concerned, Prof. Bareau asserts that '*cette différence importe peu pour nos calculs*'[5]. I shall now summarize the main arguments which have been presented to support the reliability of the corrected Ceylonese chronology:

(1) In all recensions of the *Vinayapiṭaka*, 100 (or 110) p.N. is given as the date of the Council of Vaiśālī which was held before the reign of Dharmāśoka. Therefore, the Indian chronology which places Dharmāśoka's coronation in 100 p.N. must be erroneous[6].
(2) The so-called *History of Khotan*[7] places the reign of Dharmāsoka in 234 p.N. which is not too different from the Ceylonese date (218 p.N.).
(3) The list of the Indian kings found in the Ceylonese records is partly in agreement with the lists of kings as found in the Purāṇas and the Jaina sources. Though there are considerable discrepancies in details, these similarities supposedly attest to the trustworthiness of the Ceylonese tradition[8].
(4) Mahāvīra is known to have been a contemporary of the Buddha. The date of the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra, as calculated by Hermann Jacobi and Jarl Charpentier on the basis of the chronological information found in Hemacandra's works, is 468 B.C. This would well fit in with the corrected Ceylonese chronology of the Buddha's Nirvāṇa[9].
(5) Some scholars also quote the 'dotted record' as an additional argument in favour of the Ceylonese chronology, but Prof. Bareau rightly comments that 'comme l'a reconnu Takakusu, que cette tradition est probablement originaire de Ceylan', and therefore it is no independent source[10].
(6) The Tibetan historian Sureśamatibhadra mentions the existence of a tradition placing the Nirvāṇa in 545 B.C. in a 15th century Tibetan work, i.e. a date nearly identical with the Ceylonese chronology. Bareau has commented that we do not know the basis of this chronological calculation[11], but I am rather convinced that it was taken over from Ceylon at the same time with the Pāli works which have been translated into Tibetan and included in the Kanjur[12]. Thus, this tradition, too, is no independent source, but it is very likely that it represents the second, so far unknown source of Tāranāthas calculations[13].
(7) Bhavya records 137 p.N. as the date of the first great schism according to the tradition of the Sammitīya. If we add 69 years for the reigns of Mahāpadma, Candragupta and Bindusāra, we arrive at 206 p.N. for Dharmāśoka which is not very far away from the date as recorded in the Ceylonese

tradition[14]. However, there are too many unproved presuppositions in this argument to make it convincing.

(8) The *Sāriputrapariprcchā*, a text of the Mahāsānghika school, dates the first internal schism within this school in the second century p.N. It places, however, the persecution of the Buddhists by Puṣyamitra before the first schism. If we accept 140 p.N. for the first schism which must be placed before Aśoka, and disregard the evident confusion of the text, we arrive at a date before 400 B.C. for the Nirvāṇa[15]. This is the most far-fetched of all the arguments and hardly worth of any further discussion.

(9) Fleet and others have tried to date the Nirvāṇa with the help of astronomical calculations. It is sufficient to refer here to Bareau's critical remarks on these extremely unreliable argumentations[16].

A number of other difficulties and contradictions arising from the assumption that the corrected Ceylonese chronology is reliable has already been discussed by the defenders of this chronology:

(1) The first difficulty arises from the afore-mentioned miscalculation of Aśoka's reign in the Ceylonese chronicles. Modern authors have proposed different explanations for this miscalculation. European scholars still largely make use of Wilhelm Geiger's chronology, where the miscalculation is considered as belonging to a rather late period in Ceylonese history, but it seems to me that Senerat Paranavitana, G.C. Mendis and other scholars from Sri Lanka are correct in their refutation of Geiger's views. The error, therefore, is to be found in the calculation of the dates of the kings between Devānāmpiya. Tissa and Duṭṭhagāmaṇī, and not later[17]. T.W. Rhys Davids has already formulated the consequence: '*If the date for Asoka is placed too early in the Ceylon chronicles, can we still trust the 218 years which they allege to have elapsed from the commencement of the Buddhist era down to the time of Asoka? . . . Of the answer to this question, there can I think, be no doubt. We can not*'[18].

(2) There are lists of so-called patriarchs handed down in early Buddhist traditions. It has been observed by many scholars that these lists are characterized by '*the uncommonly long duration of the lives of the earliest patriarchs according to these accounts*'[19]. The defenders of the corrected Ceylonese chronology, therefore, have to explain why the lists of the patriarchs do not conform with their chronology, and this in spite of the fact that the lists of the patriarchs in all three available main traditions confront us with the same problem. These three traditions, viz. those of the Theravāda or Pāli school, the Sarvāstivādin and of the Mūlasarvāstivādin, are clearly independent of each other[20].

(3) It is well known that the Ceylonese sources are not in complete agreement amongst themselves. We find traces of at least three different chronological systems in the two chronicles. In any case, it seems that the now accepted

Ceylonese chronology i.e. the Theravāda tradition placing the Nirvāṇa in 544/543 B.C. is the result of a particular redaction of the historiographical tradition[21].

(4) The lists of the Indian kings in the Ceylonese tradition, in the Purāṇas and in the Jaina sources and the chronology of the kings in these traditions show rather substantial disagreement in many points, and the adherents of the corrected Ceylonese chronology had to make use of very complicated and rather artificial arguments in their attempt to work out a coherent chronological system on the basis of these traditions. There is no external evidence to corroborate the results of their rather arbitrary calculations.

In addition to these points, I would like to raise a few more questions which have not been satisfactorily answered yet by the adherents of the corrected Ceylonese chronology:

(1) The tendency to claim high antiquity for the founder of a tradition is common to all periods of Indian — and not only Indian — history. If we suppose that the so-called Ceylonese tradition of Aśoka's coronation in 218 p.N. was already known to them, we must explain why Indian Buddhists should have invented a chronology which places the Buddha's Nirvāṇa much later.

(2) Whoever has worked with Buddhist church history, must be aware of the high importance of the *upasampadā* lineages on which the legitimation of the Sangha is based. At the same time, all students of Indian history should know that chronological information is usually unreliable in Indian tradition. Furthermore, the names of the patriarchs are listed in the canonical text of the Vinaya, but not the dates. Therefore, it is much more likely that the names in the lists of the patriarchs are quite correct, but the dates attributed to them are not. This conclusion is further corroborated by the fact that the historicity of several of the patriarchs is attested by independent sources, e.g. that of Sāṇavāsī or Saṇika in the report of the Council of Vaiśālī, that of Madhyāntika by the report on the missionaries sent out by Aśoka etc.

(3) Whereas the adherents of the corrected Ceylonese chronology claim that the list of the patriarchs is incomplete, though it forms part of the canonical tradition, they put great emphasis on the value of the list of the kings as handed down in much later Buddhist sources. It seems to me, however, that the list of the patriarchs was much more important for the early Buddhist Sangha than that of the kings, particularly in view of the fact that Buddhism spread in several independent kingdoms during the pre-Maurya era.

(4) The adherents of the corrected Ceylonese chronology argue that the Indian chronology is very suspicious because 100 years p.N. looks like an invented round figure, but, at the same time, they accept the reliability of the date of the Council of Vaiśālī at 100 p.N., though 100 is a round figure in this case as well. It seems to me, however, that the date 100 p.N. for the Council of

Vaiśālī has no historical value at all. The fact that it is common to all Vinaya versions is no argument in its favour, because all Vinaya versions are derived from one and the same original source. Here, the word '100' is used to denote an indefinite rather lengthy period of time.

(5) The argument that the corrected Ceylonese chronology is confirmed by Jaina chronology does not stand a critical examination. The traditional date of the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra is 528 B.C. in Svetāmbara and 510 B.C. in Digambara tradition. We meet with the same type of inaccuracies in early Jaina chronology which we already know from early Ceylonese Buddhist chronology. Jaina chronology had to be corrected on the basis of the historical date of Aśoka. But even for this corrected Jaina chronology, the list of the Theras is too short. Hermann Jacobi, in the introduction to his edition of the *Sthavirāvalīcarita* or *Pariśiṣṭaparvan* by Hemacandra says that '*there must have been far more theras than are contained in the Therāvalī*[22]'. Jacobi notes the '*confusion prevailing in their system of chronology*'. Therefore, he constructed his corrected Jaina chronology on the basis of a number of rather complicated, but also quite tentative conclusions. Which then is the main argument in favour of this particular. Jaina chronology which remained only one of several different attempts to correct the evident 'confusion' in the chronology of the Jainas? To quote Bareau again, '*l'argument le plus décisif en sa faveur est son accord avec certaines traditions bouddhiques, notamment avec la tradition singhalaise*'[23]. Bareau has rightly concluded that, therefore, it is impossible to use this argument for the calculation of the date of the Nirvāṇa of the Buddha[24].

(6) Buddhism at the time of Aśoka does not seem to have been very different from Buddhism immediately after the Buddha's Nirvāṇa. Dissension and diversification within the Sangha seems to have been limited to minor points of the Vinaya. It is very unlikely that Buddhism should have been so static during a period of more than 200 years, if we compare the rapid speed of later developments in Indian Buddhism, but also compared with the development of other religious traditions.

Therefore, the conclusion seems stringent that there is no substantial evidence at all in favour of the corrected Ceylonese chronology, but there are many arguments which point at a later date of the Nirvāṇa.

Naturally one would ask how the Ceylonese chronology has originated. I think I can answer this question. The Ceylonese chronology is accurate from king Duṭṭhagāmaṇī onwards and beginning with that period the Ceylonese chronicles can be considered as highly reliable sources of historical information. I have shown elsewhere, viz. in my *Zum Ursprung der Geschichtsschreibung im indischen Kulturbereich*[25], that historiography was initiated in Ceylon at that particular period. Information on earlier history was derived from oral tradition, and the chronological calculations were based on rough estimates made by the authors of the earliest Ceylonese historiography which underlies the now exist-

ing sources. This opinion was already formulated by Prof. G.C. Mendis who was one of the foremost historian of Sri Lanka[26]. In accordance with the political aim of this historiography, a synchronism was constructed between Vijaya, the mythic forefather of the Sinhalese, and the Nirvāṇa of the Buddha in order to serve for the legitimation of the claim of the Sinhalese to be the Buddha's elected people[27]. By the way the Vijaya-Buddha synchronism is not the only construction of Sinhala mythology which has mislead scholars into the belief that it represents reliable historical information. The second case is the famous 'Gajabāhu Synchronism', which, for a long time, has served as the basis for early Tamil chronology. As Prof. Gananath Obeyesekere has clearly shown[28], this synchronism is a purely mythological construction without any historical foundation. The third example refers to the date of Kālidāsu. As it is well-known, the tale of the contemporaneity of Kālidāsa and Kumāradāsa alias Kumāradhātusena has been used by many scholars to assign a rather exact date to Kālidāsa. Now we have come to know that Kumāradāsa, the author of the Jānakīharaṇa, lived several centuries later than king Kumāradhātusena and that this tale is of much more recent origin[29].

If the Ceylonese chronology cannot serve as a basis for the calculation of the date of the Nirvāṇa, the question remains, whether the Indian chronology should be accepted. No doubt, 100 years p.N. seems suspicious as a round figure. On the other hand, it is not impossible that Aśoka decided to undergo his coronation after his conversion to Buddhism at the auspicious occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the Nirvāṇa which happened to fall within this period of time. So far, we have no means to prove or to disprove this suggestion. It seems to me that too many details of the chronology of Aśoka's reign are still open to debate so that any suggestion of this kind may be premature.

However, we may roughly calculate the date of the Nirvāṇa on the basis of the lists of patriarchs. Without going into more details here, I may be permitted to say that, according to my calculations, the Buddha's Nirvāṇa should be dated between about 85 to 105 years before Aśoka's coronation, i.e. about 30 to 50 years before Alexander's Indian campaign. The Council of Vaiśālī may be dated about 40 to 50 p.N. The tradition that Sāṇavāsī, one of the great authorities of this convocation, was a personal pupil of Ānanda, becomes now credible[30]. We can also recalculate the date of Mahāvīra on the basis of the *sthaviraparamparā* with similar results[31]. Ernst Leumann, one of the greatest scholars in the field of Jaina studies, has rightly observed that '*im allgemeinen verraten die Thera-Listen mit ihren eingeflochtenen kirchengeschichtlichen Notizen eine genaue, sorgfältig geführte Tradition*'[32]. This statement is valid for the names of the sthaviras, but not, of course, for the number of years attributed to their patriarchates.

Several other questions of early Indian chronology must be reconsidered if my suggestion is accepted, e.g. the question of the chronological relation of the development of early Indian and Greek philosophy and their mutual influence. We also understand why Yonas are mentioned in some seemingly very ancient passages of the Tripiṭaka.

I should, however, add that careful reading of the works of G.C. Mendis, E. Lamotte and P.H.L. Eggermont which. I have quoted in this contribution should already have shown to the world of scholars that the usually accepted chronology of the Buddha does not stand a critical examination. Therefore, my present contribution does not claim to contain a new discovery, but only to remind readers of well-known facts which, unfortunately, are generally being ignored[33].

Notes

1 Jarl Charpentier, *The history of the Jains*, In 'The Cambridge History of India', vol. 1, Cambridge, 1922, p. 156.
2 Étienne Lamotte, *Histoire du bouddhisme indien*, Louvain, 1959, pp. 13–5.
3 See below and André Bareau, *La date du Nirvāṇa*, In 'Journal asiatique', 241 (1953), p. 5.
4 See Bareau, *loc. cit.*, pp. 46 f., 52.
5 Bareau, loc. cit., p. 52.
6 Bareau, loc. cit., pp. 27–9.
7 See Bareau, loc. cit., p. 51.
8 Cf. Bareau, loc. cit., pp. 31–6, 60 f.
9 Bareau, loc. cit., pp. 53–6.
10 Bareau. loc. cit., p. 53.
11 Bareau, loc. cit., p. 52.
12 For these texts, see Heinz Bechert, *A note on Pali Buddhist texts in Tibetan translation* (in preparation).
13 See Bareau, loc. cit., p. 49.
14 Bareau, loc. cit., p. 37 f.
15 Bareau, loc. cit., p. 38 f.
16 Bareau, loc. cit., p. 56.
17 See G.C. Mendis, *The Chronology of the early Pāli chronicles*, in 'University of Ceylon Review', 5 (1947), no. 1, pp. 39–54. The corrected chronology of the Ceylonese kings is followed in all more recent publications from Sri Lanka, e.g. 'University of Ceylon, History of Ceylon', vol. 1, ed. H.C. Ray, Colombo, 1960, pp. 843–47. The date of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī is, therefore, 161–137 B.C., and not 101–77 B.C. as calculated by Wilhelm Gelger.
18 T.W. Rhys Davids, *The early history of the Buddhists*, in 'The Cambridge History of India', loc. cit., p. 171.
19 Ericit Frauwallner, *The earliest Vinaya and the beginnings of Buddhist literature*, Roma, 1956, p. 166.
20 Cf. Frauwallner, loc. cit., pp. 56 f., 166–69.
21 Cf. Bareau, loc. cit., pp. 31–6. Detailed studies of the chronological traditions of the early Ceylonese chronicles were made by Prof. Eggermont, but I could not evaluate the very complicated arguments of his chronological studies yet. It seems, however, that Eggermont's findings are not in conflict with the views expressed in the present paper, and that, by other lines of argumentation, Prof. Eggermont arrives at busically the same results. See P.H.L. Eggermont, *New Notes on Aśoka and his successors*, part 1–4, in 'Persica, Revue critique et bibliographique internationale pour l'histoire de l'Asie antérieure et les civilisations Iraniennes', 2 (1965/66), 4 (1969), 5 (1970/71) and 8 (1979).
22 2nd edition, Calcutta, 1932 ('Bibliotheca Indica', 96), p. XVIII. I owe this reference to Dr. Gustav Roth. The Nirvāṇa of Mahāvira is calculated as ca. 467 B.C. on the basis of the assumption that the year 477 B.C. as the date of Buddha's Nirvāṇa has

'*been proved to be correct between very narrow limits*' by HERRMANN JACOUT, *The Kalpasūtra of Bhadrabāhu*, Lelpzig, 1879, introduction, pp. 6–10.

23 BAREAU, loc. cit., p. 56.

24 BAREAU, loc. cit., p. 56.

25 'Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen', 1969, Nr. 2. A revised English version of the contribution is HEINZ BECHERT, *The beginnings of Buddhist historiography: Mahāvaṃsa and political thinking*, in 'Religion and legitimation of power in Sri Lanka', ed. Bardwell L. Smith, Chambersburg PA, 1978, pp. 1–12.

26 G.C. MENDIS, loc. cit., pp. 42 f.

27 For the political and didactic aim of the early historiography of Ceylon, see BECHERT, *The beginnings of Buddhist historiography: Mahāvaṃsa and political thinking*, loc. cit., pp. 6–10.

28 GANANATH OBEYESEKERE, *Gajabahu and the Gajabahu Synchronism*, in 'The Ceylon Journal of the Humanities', I (1970), pp. 25–6. See also H. BECHERT, *Mythalogie der singhalesischen Volksreligion*, in 'Wörterbuch der Mythologie', ed. H.W. Haussig, I. Abt., Lieferung 15, pp. 581, 624–27.

29 *The Jānakīharuṇa of Kumāradāsa*, ed. S. Paranavitana and C.E. Godukumbura, Colombo, 1967, Introduction, pp. LI–LXXII. The old story is still reproduced in W. RUBEN, *Kālidāsa, Die menschliche Bedentung seiner Werke*, Berlin, 1956, p. 12.

30 For the chronology of this period cf. also JEAN FILLIOZAT, *La date de l'avènement de Candragupta roi de Magadha (313 avant J.-C.)*, in 'Journal des savants', 1978, pp. 175–84.

31 This attempt will be made elsewhere by the present author.

32 ERNST LEUMANN, *Zwei weitere Kālaka-Legenden*, in 'Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft', 37 (1883), p. 502.

33 I would like to thank Prof. Eggermont for the encouragement to publish my findings which he gave me on the occasion of the Second Conference of the International Association for Buddhist Studies in Nalanda, January 1980, when I read an extremely short summary of my paper. Finally I should mention that the date of the Buddha as suggested by the present author, viz. ca. 368–370 B.C., was already suggested by one of the earliest Western Indologists, viz. by N.L. Westergaard (N.L. WESTERGAARD, *Ueber den ältesten Zeitraum der indischen Geschichte ... [und] Ueber Buddha's Todesjahr ...*, Breslau, 1862, pp. 94–128). The original Danish version was published by the Royal Danish Academy in 1860. Dr. E. Pauly of Copenhagen University kindly gave me this information after the presentation of the present paper at the Conference-Seminar of Indological Studies in Stockholm. However, Westergaard's chronological arguments are now outdated, and it is more or less by chance that the date proposed by him in 1860 roughly corresponds to the date proposed in the present paper.

4

ON THE VERY IDEA OF THE PALI CANON

Steven Collins

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In this paper I address the issue of the formation and role of the Pali Canon[1] in Theravāda history and culture. My perspective is strictly that of an external observer wishing to make a contribution to historical scholarship, or at least to initiate an academic discussion of the issue: I mean to imply no evaluation whatsoever of any way in which the Canon has been or is seen by Theravāda Buddhists. From this perspective and for these purposes, I want to suggest that the role of the Canonical texts in Theravāda tradition has been misunderstood, and that the usual scholarly focus on the early period of Theravāda is misplaced. We must, I will suggest, reject the equation 'the Pali Canon = Early Buddhism',[2] and move away from an outmoded and quixotic concern with origins to what I would see as a properly focussed and realistic historical perspective. Rather than pre-existing the Theravāda school, as the textual basis from which it arose and which it sought to preserve, the Pali Canon — by which I mean the closed list of scriptures with a special and specific authority as the avowed historical record of the Buddha's teaching — should be seen as a *product* of that school, as part of a strategy of legitimation by the monks of the Mahāvihāra lineage in Ceylon in the early centuries of the first millennium A.D.

It seems to me useful to divide Theravāda Buddhist history into three periods, according to the different kinds of evidence which are available to us.[3] The first or 'early' period lasts from the time of the Buddha (whenever that was) to that of Aśoka. We have no evidence of any kind which can be securely dated before Aśoka; to describe, speculatively, pre-Aśokan Buddhism, we must make inferences from his inscriptions, from the texts (whose extant form is due to the later period) and perhaps also from the material remains of later times. From the time of Aśoka onwards, in the second or 'middle' period, in addition to an increasing amount of textual materials we have inscriptions, coins, paintings, sculptures and other material remains to supplement and when necessary correct what the texts tell us. The third or 'modern' period refers to those recent centuries in which we have, in addition to material and textual primary sources, reports from

western travellers, officials of imperial governments, anthropologists and others, as well as the modern records kept by indigenous rulers and bureaucracies. Much of the evidence for 'early', pre-Aśokan Buddhism is to be found in the Pali Canonical texts, or rather some of them; but in assessing the nature of this evidence we must be much more fully aware of their provenance in the 'traditional' Theravāda context than has hitherto been the case.[4] In the first part of the paper, I shall outline two senses of the word 'canon', and then look for comparable terms in Pali. In the second, I shall sketch in broad brushstrokes what I see as the context in which the Pali Canon emerged; and in conclusion I shall ask briefly what role has in fact been played by this Canon, and — more significantly — by the idea of such a Canon, in those religious cultures we denote by the short-hand term, 'Theravāda'.

I

The word 'canon', in relation to textual materials, can usefully be taken in two ways[5]: first, in a general sense, as an equivalent to 'scripture' (oral or written). Used in this way, the term does not specify that the collection of texts so designated constitutes a closed list; it merely assigns a certain authority to them, without excluding the possibility that others could be, or may come to be included in the collection. In the second sense, however, the idea of a 'canon' contains precisely such an exclusivist specification that it is *this* closed list of texts, *and no others*, which are the 'foundational documents'. The existence of some sort of scriptural or canonical materials in the nonspecific, inclusivist sense is surely a necessary condition for a religion to be or have what anthropologists used to call a 'Great Tradition'. But the existence of a canon in the second, exclusivist sense is, on the contrary, a non-universal and contingent feature, dependent on the specific history of a given milieu which produces the selection and redaction of such a closed list. When compared with other extant collections of scriptures in Buddhism, I think the Pali Canon is unique in being an exclusive, closed list. Why did such a canon develop in traditional Theravāda Buddhism?

First, what Pali terms might correspond to 'canon'? There are three main candidates: the word *pāli* itself, the notion of the *tipiṭaka*, 'the three baskets' of tradition, and most importantly, the concept of *buddhavacana*, 'the Buddha's Word(s)'.

(i) As is well-known, the word *pāli* was not originally the name of a language, but a term meaning firstly a line, bridge or causeway, and thence a 'text'.[6] It is often found in apposition to *aṭṭhakathā*, which is usually translated 'commentary', and so some scholars have taken *pāli* to mean 'canon'.[7] I would not want to disagree with this, if the term is used in the general and inclusivist sense of 'scripture' outlined above. But the primary use of the distinction between *pāli* and *aṭṭhakathā* is not to classify documents into different categories (although it did come to have that function: e.g. Sp 549, Sv 581), and

still less to denote explicitly a closed list of texts, as the terms 'canon' and 'commentary' might imply; rather, it was to distinguish between the precise wording of a text, in the text-critical sense, and the more flexible task of 'saying what it means', which is the literal translation of *aṭṭhakathā*.[8] *Pāli* and *aṭṭha* are regularly applied to texts in this way (e.g. Mp IV 187, Th-a II 135–6 et freq.): these terms are often given in commentarial exegesis of the pair *dhamma* and *attha* (e.g. Pj II 333, 604, Ja II 351, VI 223; compare the 'four-fold profundity' at Sp 22 and Sv 20, the former using *pāli*, the latter *tanti*). *Pāli* can be used synonymously with *pāṭha*, 'text', in the sense of 'reading', often when discussing variants (e.g. Sv 49, Ud-a 105–6, Th-a II 203).[9] Quotations can be introduced by phrases such as *tatrāyaṃ pāli*, 'on this matter (there is) this text', (e.g. Sp 13, 395, Spk I 200, Th-a III 105); the term *pāli-vaṇṇanā*, 'text-commentary', can be used in the same way as *pada-vaṇṇanā*, 'word-commentary' (Sv 771, 982, Mp II 306), both of which are complementary to *vinicchaya-kathā*, 'exegesis' or *aṭṭha-vaṇṇanā*, 'explanation of the meaning' (Vibh-a 291, Vism 16, Pj I 123 foll.). *Pāli* can refer to the text of a specific individual work, as *Udāna-pāli* (Ud-a 4) or *A padāna-pāli* (Th-a II 201, III 204). The phrases *pāliyaṃ* (*an*)*āgata* (or (*an*)*ārūḷha*) are used to mean '(not) handed down in a/the text', referring to textual passages, topics and names of people (e.g. Sp 466, 841, 1112, Sv 989, Mp I 272, IV 143, Th-a I 44, III 203); the term *pālimuttaka*, 'not found in a (the) text(s) is used both of sermons by the Buddha not rehearsed at the Councils and thus not extant (Sv 539, Ud-a 419–20, cp. Sv 238, 636, Spk I 201) and of Disciplinary decisions and rulings in use by the monkhood but not found in the text of the Vinaya itself (Sp 294 et freq.). In none of these uses, however, does the term in itself imply that the texts so referred to are a closed list.[10]

(ii) The term *piṭaka* is usually taken to mean 'basket'.[11] If this is in fact the same word as *piṭaka* meaning 'basket',[12] then it is intriguing to speculate on what could be the metaphor underlying its use to mean 'tradition', given that one cannot literally put oral 'texts' in baskets: Trenckner (1908, pp. 119–121) held that just as in excavations or digging work in ancient India, baskets of earth were passed along a row of labourers, so the Buddhist tradition was passed along a line of transmission, in *piṭakas*, from teacher to pupil. Winternitz (1933, pp. 8–9 note 3) suggested that the idea is of 'receptacles in which gems, family treasures, were preserved from generation to generation'. In any case, we must agree, I think, with Rhys Davids (who accepted Trenckner's view, (1894), p. 28) that the term *tipiṭaka* refers to 'three bodies of oral tradition as handed down from teacher to pupil'. It is, perhaps, not necessary to see a metaphor underlying the term: just as the term *āgama*, in both Sanskrit and Pali, means colourlessly 'something which has come down', 'a text', and *saṃhitā* in Sanskrit means 'a putting together, a sequence, a collection (of words, ideas, etc.)' and hence 'a text', so *piṭaka* can simply mean 'a collection (of words, stories, etc.)' and hence 'a (part of a) tradition'.[13] The word is used in canonical texts to mean a 'tradition' or 'customary form' of religious teaching: but interestingly, in a pejorative sense, as a poor second-best to personal spiritual experience and knowledge.[14]

The earliest extant uses of the word *tipiṭaka* date from inscriptions and texts of the 1st century A.D.[15] At this period, I think, it should be taken to denote not three closed lists of documents, but rather three different genres within the tradition; and to point to generic differences in style and content in the Disciplinary Rules (*Vinaya-piṭaka*), the Discourses (*Sutta-piṭaka*) and the 'Further Teachings' (*A bhidhammapiṭaka*). This tripartite division continues another, said in the canon to have existed during the Buddha's lifetime: the division of labour between *vinaya-*, *sutta-*, and *māṭika-dhara*-s, 'those who bear (in memory) the disciplinary rules, the teachings and the mnemonic lists'.[16] Clearly during the Buddha's lifetime, there can have been no closed canon[17]: and I agree with Lamotte (58, p. 164), when he says that 'all that the classification of scripture into three baskets does is to attest to the existence within the religious community of three different specialisms, having for their objects the doctrine, the discipline and scholastic matters (*la scolastique*) respectively'. Eventually, of course, the term *tipiṭaka* did indeed come to have the sense of a closed and fixed Canon.[18]

(iii) Originally, then, neither *pāli* nor *tipiṭaka* referred to a closed canon. This is true also of the third term *buddha-vacana*, 'The Word of the Buddha'; but here we do begin to approach something like our ideas of a 'canon' and 'canonical authority'.[19] The term, and other words and phrases referring to 'what was said by the Buddha' can be found in the Canonical texts.[20] One of Aśoka's inscriptions reads *e keci bhaṃte bhagavatā budhena bhaṣite save se subhāsite vā*, 'everything which was said by the Blessed One, the Buddha, was well-said'.[21] The idea behind these terms can be, and has been taken in Buddhism in two crucially different ways. On the one hand it can be used, as it most commonly has been in the extant Mahāvihārin tradition of Theravāda, to mean the actual word(s) of the historical Buddha Gotama — despite the fact that it has always been evident that the collection of texts so designated includes many which cannot have been actually spoken by him (those spoken by other monks before and after his death, for example). For this reason and others, on the other hand, there is also an historically unspecific sense of the term, which refers in general to the — eternal and eternally renewable — salvific content of Buddhist Teaching: to use a phrase ubiquitous in the Canon, it refers to the 'spirit' (*attha*) rather than the mere 'letter' (*vyañjana*) of the Buddha's law (*dhamma*).

This non-historical approach to scriptural authority, although not absent from Theravāda, is much more characteristic of Mahāyāna traditions, where the eternal truth of the Dharma may be revealed in texts of any and every historical provenance. The attitude is nicely captured in the phrase 'whatever is well-spoken is spoken by the Buddha'.[22] A *sutta* from the Aṅguttara Nikāya (A IV 162–66), contains this phrase, and is worth looking at in more detail.[23] It describes a conversation between the monk Uttara and the king of the gods, Sakka (Indra). Indra is impressed with a talk he has been told of, given by Uttara to some monks; he descends from heaven and asks Uttara whether what he said was own inspiration (*sakaṃ paṭibhānaṃ*) or the word of the Buddha (*Bhagavato vacanaṃ*). Uttara

replies with a smile: 'it is just as if there were a great heap of grain near some village or town, and people were to take grain from it in buckets or baskets (*piṭakehi*), in their laps or hands. If one were to go up to these people and ask them "where are you bringing this grain from?", how would they properly explain themselves?' Indra replies that they would do so simply by saying that they got the grain from the heap. Uttara explains 'in the same way, king of the gods, whatever is well-spoken is all the word of the Blessed One . . . Whenever I or others preach, what we say is derived from there' (*yaṃ kiñci subhāsitaṃ sabban taṃ tassa Bhagavato vacanaṃ . . ., tato upādāy' upādāya mayañ c' aññe ca bhaṇāma*). (The choice of *bhaṇati* here is not accidental: *bhāṇa* and other derivatives are regularly used both for sermons and for the recitation of passages from the canonical texts.) Clearly the point of the remark here is simply that Uttara is saying that what he teaches comes from the Buddha; but grammatically there would be nothing wrong with interpreting his remark in the Mahāyānist sense. (In contrast, the inscription of Aśoka cited above is unambiguously *not* the Mahāyānist sentiment, since it serves as an introduction to his list of recommended texts (see below, and notes 22, 27): the logic of the edict is that 'everything said by the Buddha was well-said, but these texts are especially good . . .'.) Why then did what has become Theravāda 'orthodoxy' choose to emphasise an historicist and exclusivist idea of its 'Canon', 'the Buddha's Word(s)'?

II

For the sake of brevity, I will present my argument schematically. Before the 1st century B.C., all Buddhist texts are said to have been preserved orally[24]; there is a large amount of evidence from a wide variety of sources, mutually contradictory for the most part, which suggests that a series of meetings were held, usually called 'Councils' in English but more precisely 'Communal Recitations' (*saṅgīti*), one of whose functions was for monks to recite together the scriptures, whatever they were.[25] Apart from Aśoka's inscription which mentions by name some texts still extant,[26] however, we simply have no idea which texts in fact pre-date Aśoka, and which might have been thus recited. The traditional account has it that Pali texts were transmitted to Ceylon in the 3rd century B.C., along with commentaries, and there again to have been preserved orally (the commentaries being translated into and elaborated in Sinhalese). Both texts and commentaries were then written down during the (second) reign of King Vaṭṭagāmaṇī, between 29 and 17 B.C.[27] (see below). The following two statements, both written by staunchly orthodox modern Theravādins, make it clear that we cannot know the relation between 'the canon' as we now have it and the canon as it was being transmitted at this time; still less can we know that this canon was thought of in the closed, exclusivist sense. Malalasekara writes, in his standard work *The Pali Literature of Ceylon* (1928, p. 44), 'how far the Tipiṭaka and its commentary reduced to writing at Ālu-vihāra resemble them as they have come down to us today no-one can say'. In fact, the earliest date to which we

can assign the Canon in the specific and final form in which we now have it is the time of Buddhaghosa. As Walpola Rāhula observes in his History of Buddhism in Ceylon (1956, p. xix):

> 'Although there is evidence to prove the growth of the Pali Scriptures during the early centuries of Buddhism in India and Ceylon, there is no reason to doubt that their growth was arrested and the text was finally fixed in the 5th century A.C. when the Sinhalese Commentaries on the Tipiṭaka were translated into Pali by Buddhaghosa'.[28]

The Pali Canon, like most other religious Canons, was produced in a context of dispute, here sectarian monastic rivalries. King Vaṭṭagāmiṇī supported the rivals of the Mahāvihārin monks, those of the recently founded Abhayagiri monastery. (In the 4th century there arose a third sub-sect, the Jetavana group, but my focus here will be on the Mahāvihāra-Abhayagiri rivalry.[29]) Both groups existed throughout the first millenium, up until king Parakkamabāhu I suppressed the others in favour of the Mahāvihāra in the 12th century (the extant Mahāvihārin texts call this his 'unification' of the monkhood); and at certain periods Abhayagiri was clearly the more numerous and dominant. With some disputed exceptions,[30] no Abhayagiri texts survive, although texts and commentaries are ascribed to them (directly or indirectly) in extant Mahāvihārin works.[31] We can trace, I think, a significant difference between Mahāvihārin texts written before Parakkamabāhu's 'reform' and those written after: that is, in the direction of an increasingly triumphalist re-writing of earlier history.

One area where this change is particularly evident is in accounts of the writing down of the canon: the earliest versions are remarkably brief and restrained, giving little idea of the real reasons for this development, to us so significant.[32] The *Dīpavaṃsa* (XX 20–1) and *Mahāvaṃsa* (XXXIII 100–1) have exactly the same stanzas:

> *piṭakattayapāliñ ca tassā aṭṭhakathaṃ pi ca*
> *mukhapāṭhena ānesuṃ pubbe bhikkhū mahāmatī;*
> *hāniṃ disvāna sattānaṃ tadā bhikkhū samāgatā*
> *ciraṭṭhitatthaṃ dhammassa potthakesu likhāpayuṃ.*

> 'Previously, intelligent monks (had) preserved the text of the three piṭakas and its commentary orally; but (now) when the monks saw the *hāni* of beings they came together and had them[33] written in books, in order that the Teaching should endure for a long time.'

The word *hāni*, which I have left untranslated, means 'loss', 'decay', 'diminution', 'abandonment', etc. The issue here is how to take it in context. The *Dīpavaṃsa* account places these stanzas in the midst of what is more or less a list of kings, with minimal narrative embellishment. It mentions Vaṭṭagāmanī,

but simply gives the bare details of his accessions to the throne (he was king twice), and the length of his reign. Oldenberg's translation (1879, p. 211) has 'decay', Law's (1959, p. 249) 'loss', neither of which attempts to interpret the term. The *Mahāvaṃsa* places the stanzas immediately after its account of the secession of the monk Mahātissa, and the subsequent split between the two monastic fraternities. Mindful of this perhaps, Geiger (1912, p. 237) translates *hāni* as 'falling away (from religion)'. In modern secondary works, there has arisen a tendency to associate the writing of the texts most closely with conditions of war and famine, and so to translate *hāni* as 'decrease (in numbers)', or more generally 'disastrous state'.[34] This seems first to have been suggested by Adikaram (1946, Chap. 4); Rāhula's account (1956, pp. 81–2, 157–8) is very frequently cited in other secondary works. These authors recount stories concerning war between Sinhalese and Tamil kings, and a famine associated with a brahmin turned bandit called Tissa.[35] The *Mahāvaṃsa* mentions Tissa briefly earlier in the Chapter (XXXIII, 37–41), but not the famine.

Although it is quite plausible to connect the decision to commit the texts to writing with the troubled conditions of the time, it is worth noticing that this is not given as a reason in any of the primary sources, early or late.[36] Adikaram himself suggests (pp. 115 foll.) that conditions in Rohaṇa, in the south of the island, may not have been as bad as in the north; and as Gunawardana (1982) has shown, it is anachronistic to think of the island at this period as a single state centred at Anurādhapura. I suggest, not necessarily a replacement for their account but perhaps as a complement to it, that we follow the *Mahāvaṃsa* and associate the writing of the texts and commentaries with the contemporary rivalry between the Mahāvihāra and Abhayagiri monasteries; and I would argue that at least one of the motives for the decision was the fixation, through writing, of a definitive list of scriptures, at a time when the position of the Mahāvihāra as sole legitimate custodians of Buddhism was under threat.[37] Certainly in the following centuries, one of the major themes in Mahāvihārin writing about its rivals concerns their use of 'heterodox' scriptures, in addition to the Pali texts shared by all three groups. It seems that at least from the 3rd century A.D., and perhaps before, the Abhayagiri monks used what we would now call Mahāyāna texts[38]; it is revealing that this is standardly referred to by their Mahāvihārin opponents as their embracing the *vetulla-vāda*. The term *vetulla*, Sanskrit *vaitulya* or *vaipulya*, meaning 'extended' or 'enlarged', refers to the great extent of certain Mahāyāna scriptures.[39] Later triumphalist chronicles condemn with increasing vehemence the heresy of these unacceptable texts, and tell of repeated book-burnings by pro-Mahāvihārin kings.[40]

In the 5th century the great Indian monk Buddhaghosa spent some time in Ceylon at the Mahāvihāra, writing what are now the standard Pali commentarial works, on the basis of the earlier Sinhalese texts.[41] This also took place during the reign of a king who supported the Abhayagiri, Mahānāma (409–431). Thus Adikaram (1946, p. 94) aptly remarks:

'It is worthy of notice that the two most important events, namely, the

> writing down of the Pali texts at Āloka-vihāra and the translation of the Commentaries into Pali, both took place during the reigns of kings who were not favourably disposed towards the Mahāvihāra and who actively helped the opposing camp, the Abhayagirivihāra'.

The account in the *Cūlavaṃsa*, written after Parakkamabāhu I and in part as a panegyric on him, tells us that when Buddhaghosa had produced his digest of Theravāda scholasticism, the *Visuddhimagga*, the Mahāvihārin elders exclaimed 'assuredly, he is Metteyya (the future Buddha) (*nissaṃsayaṃ sa Metteyyo*); then when he had rendered their commentaries into Pali, they are said to have received them *pāliṃ viya*, literally 'just as (or 'as if they were') Canonical texts', or more loosely 'as the authoritative version'.[42] The parallelism is obvious: the Buddha Gotama produced the Texts (*pāli*) as *buddha-vacana*, 'the Buddha Metteyya' produces an authoritative redaction of the commentaries, *pāliṃ viya*![43]

Finally, I think we should see the writing and fixing of a closed canon in relation to the creation of historical chronicles in Ceylon: the *vaṃsa* tradition.[44] The term *vaṃsa* (Sanskrit *vaṃśa*) was used in India for a variety of forms of historical text, primarily genealogies, from the time of the Brāhmaṇas. Another meaning of the term is 'bamboo', and I think we may see some significance in this. Bamboo grows by sending out one, and only one, shoot: unlike our concept of a genealogical tree, therefore, a *vaṃśa* genealogy allows only one legitimate successor at a time. Thus the term not only describes a line of transmission, but at the same time ascribes to the members of the *vaṃśa* a specific status and authority as legitimate heirs of that transmission. In the tradition of *purāṇa* writing, two of the traditional five characteristics (*pañcalakṣaṇa*) alleged to be present in any such text are *vaṃśa* and *vaṃśānucarita*; the former term refers to a genealogy of gods, patriarchs, kings and great families, the latter to the deeds of such a *vaṃśa*. (How far these five characteristics actually do apply to the extant *purāṇas* is a complex issue.) The texts in question here are not only the great compendia of mythology, theology, etc., concerning various great gods such as Viṣṇu and Śiva; they include also, amongst others, a little-studied genre of regional, caste *purāṇa*s, about which Ludo Rocher says, in his recent book on the subject (1986, p. 72):

> Even though this type of texts relate to single castes in limited areas of the subcontinent, they are again not fundamentally different from purāṇic literature generally ... [then, quoting another writer:] The caste-purāṇas may be considered to be the extension of *Vaṃśānucarita*, in the sense that they devote themselves to the history of some *Vaṃśa*, in the broad sense'.

I suggest that we see the Pali chronicles in this perspective as a part of the literary genre of the *purāṇa* in the widest sense, listing the genealogy and deeds of

the lineage of the Buddha and his heritage. In addition, both by their very existence and by such details of their content as the stories of visits by the Buddha to the different Theravāda lands, the *vaṃsa* texts produced in Ceylon and later in mainland Southeast Asia served the *heilsgeschichtliche* purpose of connecting these areas with India. More specifically, as Heinz Bechert has argued (1978), the early examples in Ceylon may have served the political purpose of enhancing and encouraging Sinhalese nationalism. It has long been recognised that the ideology of these *vaṃsa* texts is that of the *dhammadīpa*, the island which the Buddha prophesied would be the historical vehicle of his saving truth.[45]

It has often been noted that the dominant Theravāda attitude to its scriptures, unlike other Buddhist groups, is an historicist one; but it has not been noticed, I think, that this development coincides with the production by Theravāda monks of what Bechert calls the only 'historical literature in the strict sense of the word [in South Asia] prior to the period of the Muslim invasions'.[46] The earlier Sinhalese commentarial materials, shared by both Mahāvihāra and Abhayagiri groups, contained *vaṃsa* sections, and there may have been at least one specifically Abhayagiri *vaṃsa*[47]; but a particular characteristic of the development of the Mahāvihāra tradition is its rich and varied collection of these texts, usually called 'Chronicles' in English. There were probably many different reasons for their being produced, and it is true that earlier Sanskrit and Pali works with *vaṃsa* sections were preserved orally. Nonetheless I suggest that a revealing perspective on the issue can be gained from the comparative historical and anthropological study of literacy, where it is widely recognised that one of the earliest functions of writing was the making of lists.[48] I suggest that both the idea of a fixed and closed Canon and the *vaṃsa* genre may be seen together as members of the same class: the 'list'. The *vaṃsa* genre is descended from name-lists (genealogies) and event-lists (annals); the closed 'canon' is also descended from name-lists and word-lists, but adds to the simple idea of a list of texts (a librarian's concern, in itself) the crucial political element of closure: nothing can be added or taken away.

In brief, then, I argue that the following four developments in the Theravāda tradition, taking place over the first half of the first millenium A.D., are related, not only conceptually and historically, but also as connected parts of a strategy of self-definition and self-legitimation by the Mahāvihārin monks:

(i) the writing down of the canon and commentaries;
(ii) the production of a closed and historically specific canon of scripture;
(iii) the standardisation of authoritative commentaries, and
(iv) the development of the historiographical tradition of *vaṃsa* texts. (Incidentally, not only might we explain the creation of a fixed Canon by this historicism; it may be that this form of religious legitimation was one reason for the birth, or at least the first real flourishing of historiography in South Asian culture at this place and time.)

There have been, of course, other forms of legitimation in Theravāda, notably the possession and control of relics and images.[49] But one of the most salient characteristics of the Mahāvihārin lineage has always been its conservative and/or reformist, text-oriented self-definition; this was significantly underlined and extended, both in Buddhism and in Buddhist scholarship, by the modern 'scripturalism' specific to the 19th and 20th centuries.[50] It is well-known that Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia includes many more things than are described and prescribed in the Pali Canon; these are often seen as 'later developments', many of which are standardly but misleadingly referred to as 'Mahāyāna elements'. Rather than see things in this way, I suggest, we should take this wider Buddhist culture as the contemporary context in which the move to an historicist 'orthodoxy' was made. We know that the Mahāvihārin lineage became ultimately dominant in Ceylon; and throughout its spread across mainland Southeast Asia as 'Sinhala' Buddhism, it seems to have been perceived precisely as a 'reform' movement, and to have been supported by kings with this rhetoric against already-existing forms of Buddhism.[51] Within established Theravāda cultures, again, periodic reform movements have taken place, with the same rhetoric; and this is one important ingredient in Buddhist modernism: 'back to the Canon!' (Something like this seems to be happening in the Theravāda revival in contemporary Nepal.[52])

III

But what role did the actual Canon play in all this? Did these and only these texts function as 'scripture', with no others having canonical authority in the first and more general sense I distinguished earlier? No. We know that throughout Theravāda history, up to and including the modern world, many other texts, both written and in oral-ritual form, have been used.[53] The evidence suggests that both in so-called 'popular' practice and in the monastic world, even among virtuosos, only parts of the Canonical collection have ever been in wide currency, and that other texts have been known and used, sometimes very much more widely.[54] Keyes writes (1983, p. 272):

> 'The relevance of texts to religious dogma in the worldview of any people cannot be assumed simply because some set of texts have been recognized as belonging to a particular religious tradition. It is necessary, in every particular case, to identify those texts that can be shown to be the sources of dogmatic formulations that are being communicated to the people through some medium. There is no single integrated textual tradition based on a "canon" to the exclusion of all other texts . . . . The very size and complexity of a canon leads those who use it to give differential emphasis to its component texts. Moreover, even those for whom a defined set of scriptures exists will employ as sources of religious ideas many texts which do not belong to a canon. For

> example, the evidence from monastery libraries in Laos and Thailand ... reveals that what constitutes the Theravādin dhamma for people in these areas includes only a small portion of the total Tipiṭaka, some semi-canonical commentaries such as Buddhaghosa's Visuddhimagga, a large number of pseudo-jātaka and other pseudo-canonical works, histories of shrines and other sacred histories, liturgical works, and popular commentaries. Moreover, for any particular temple-monastery in Thailand or Laos, the collection of texts available to the people in the associated community are not exactly the same as those found in another temple-monastery. In brief, the relevance of textual formulations to religious dogma in popular worldviews is problematic in each specific case'.[55]

It might well be that the content of most smaller monastery libraries is in effect a 'ritual canon'; that is, it contains the texts, canonical or otherwise, which are in actual use in ritual life in the area concerned.[56] A monastic library with larger holdings may perhaps be compared to a modern academic library: for those few who happen to have access to it, it affords a seemingly obvious and straightforward resource, which provides and defines a cultural 'world'; but one which gives a wildly misleading picture of the actual experience (literate, cultural, religious and otherwise) of those communities without such access.

If we wish to delineate the actual 'canon' or 'canons' of scripture (in the wider sense) in use at different times and places of the Theravāda world, we need empirical research into each individual case, not a simple deduction from the existence of the closed *tipiṭaka* produced by the Mahāvihāra. We need more research, for example, historical and ethnographic, on the actual possession and use of texts, in monastery libraries and elsewhere, and on the content of sermons and festival presentations to laity, to establish more clearly than we currently can just what role has been played by the works included in the canonical list. The hypothesis I have sketched out here suggests that the actual importance of what we know as the Pali Canon has not lain in the specific texts collected in that list, but rather in the *idea* of such a collection, the idea that one lineage has the definitive list of *buddha-vacana*.[57] So *the* Pali Canon should be seen as just *a* 'canon' (in one sense of that word) in Pali, one amongst others.

In memory of I.B. Horner*

Notes

* In 1981, when I had the honour to be invited to serve on the Council of the Pali Text Society, my first task was to prepare for publication Miss I.B. Horner's last work, and unfinished translation of fifty stories originating from Chieng Mai in Thailand in the fifteenth century, and very closely modelled on the canonical Jātaka tales. She was working from the draft of the edition made by P.S. Jaini, which was subsequently pub-

lished by the PTS as *Paññāsa Jātaka* (vol. 1, 1981; vol. 2, 1983). Professor Jaini also completed the translation. In choosing a title for the translation volumes, we followed a suggestion found in Miss Horner's notes for the work, where she referred to it as 'Apocryphal Birth Stories'; the volumes were published thus in 1985 (vol. 1) and 1986 (vol. 2). At that time Professor Jaini and I discussed, without coming to a clear conclusion, the issue of what is really meant in a Buddhist context by the opposition between 'canonical' and 'apocryphal' texts; at his instigation, I included in the brief preface to Volume 1 some notes on the background in Christian usage of the term 'apocryphal'. This paper is a preliminary result of the research inspired by those initial discussions. It was first given, under the present title, as the Second I.B. Horner Memorial Lecture for the PTS in London, September 1987. I am glad to be able to publish it here in memory of Miss Horner, whose contribution both to Pali studies in general and to the PTS in particular has been so great. My title is adapted from the philosophical paper by Donald Davison, 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme' (reprinted in Davison 1984).

1 References to Pāli texts use the abbreviations of the Critical Pāli Dictionary.

2 The general tenor of the re-evaluation I am recommending here is very much in line with the work being produced by Gregory Schopen, who has shown that for so many things either not found or not emphasised in the Canon, and usually seen as 'later' developments, there is in fact extensive evidence in the earliest archaeological and epigraphical remains: see, for example Schopen 1984, 1985 and 1989.

3 I have discussed this further in Collins (1990). The first two of my three periods are similar to those identified by Heinz Bechert (e.g. 1966, 1973, 1979, 1985) as 'early' and 'traditional'; but his criterion for division and designation is the relation of the monastic community to society, and my third, 'modern' period does not correspond to his third, 'modernist' one. (I am grateful to Prof. Bechert for clarifying this issue, in correspondence.)

4 I agree wholeheartedly with the suggestions made about the value of the commentaries in this regard by Bond (1980). Certain arguments from the content of the Canon do, I think, have force. For example, apart from a few *Suttas* which deal with the 'mythical' figure of the Universal Emperor, the *cakkavatti*, the texts do not betray any knowledge of large-scale political units such as that of Aśoka. (I use the word 'mythical' here in the same way as Gombrich (1988, p. 82); cf. also pp. 20–21 on this subject.) Anachronism of various sorts is not usually a problem in Buddhist literature; and so it would seem likely that these texts, in general, do indeed come from pre-Aśokan times. But this kind of argumentation is very complex, and of course we cannot know that because something is not in the texts, it did not exist: the history of Hindu literature furnishes many counter-examples. (See further note 25 below.)

5 In the argument of this paragraph I have profited from articles by Sheppard (1987) and, especially, Olivelle (unpubl. ms.). Sheppard writes that 'on the one hand, [the term "canon"] can be used to refer to a rule, standard, ideal, norm, or authoritative office or literature, whether oral or written. On the other hand, it can signify a temporary or perpetual fixation, standardization, enumeration, listing, chronology, register, or catalog of exemplary or normative persons, places, or things [and, in our case, texts]. The former dimension emphasizes internal signs of an elevated status. The latter puts stress on the precise boundary, limits, or measure of what ... belongs within or falls outside of a specific "canon" '.

In proposing a closely related distinction, Olivelle argues that 'a canon, like an orthodoxy, may be exclusive or inclusive. An exclusive canon both lists the documents included in the scripture and implicitly or explicitly excludes all other documents; the canon is a closed list. An inclusive canon also has a list of documents contained in the scriptures. But it makes no claim to be exhaustive. The list merely has a positive function and it does not intend to exclude documents outside the list. In

cases such as the [Indian] Veda, the tradition explicitly admits the possibility that there may exist other documents belonging to the Veda. Other traditions, such as most oral ones, may simply ignore the issue. In all cases of inclusive canons, however, the traditions do not feel the need to precisely demarcate the canonical boundaries'. McDermott (1984, p. 32) remarks aptly that 'the Mahāyāna *Sūtras* in India fit into a more Sanskritized concept of scripture and canon (or lack thereof) than does the Theravāda *Tipiṭaka*'.

6 The metaphor here, as in other words for texts meaning 'line', 'thread', etc. (e.g. *gantha, tanti*, and *sutta*, if this is indeed equivalent to Sanskrit *sūtra*), seems rarely if ever to remain alive in the use of the term. One use of the term in parts of the *Manoratha-pūraṇī* may preserve a sense of 'line' or 'list'. The *Aṅguttara* text names a series of monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen, each of whom is said to be 'pre-eminent' in some sphere. At the end of each commentarial section, the text states *therapālivaṇṇanā niṭṭhitā* (Mp I 337), (and similarly) *theripāli-* (381), *theripāli-* (381), *upāsakapāli-* (401), *upāsikāpāli-* (458). (There are variant readings *therapāḷiyā, therīpāḷiyā*, and *upāsikāpāḷiyā* (sic) *vaṇṇanā* in the first three places.) This may be translated, taking the first example, 'the commentary on the list of elders is completed', instead of simply 'the commentary on the text of (or about) elders . . .' At the beginning of the commentaries on the last three 'lists', the text states *therīpāliyaṃ pathame* (337), *upāsakapāliyaṃ* (482 — *pathame* must have been accidentally omitted here; there is a v.l. *upāsakapāḷi-vaṇṇanāya pathame*), and *upāsikāpāliyaṃ pathame* (401). *Pathame* cannot agree with *-pāliyaṃ* (or *-vaṇṇanāya*); there must be some appropriate masculine noun implied (such as *sutta*: see A I 23 note 3), so that we may translate 'in the first *sutta* in the list of (or text about) nuns (laymen, laywomen)'. The v.l. at 337, *therīpāliyā*, which could be genitive, makes this rendering easier, 'in the first *sutta* of the list (text) of nuns'. (Cp. e.g. Mp II 34 *catutthavaggassa pathame*.) At Mp I 29 there is *rūpapāli*, at II 1 *aṭṭhānapāliyaṃ* (v.l. *-pāliyā*); at II 18 *aṭṭhānapālivaṇṇanā niṭṭhitā* and, beginning the next section, *ekadhammapāliyaṃ*.

Filliozat proposed that in the compounds *pāli-bhāsā* and its equivalent *tanti-bhāsā* (Sanskrit *tantra*) both first terms should be understood as referring literally to 'lines', i.e. lines of the text in manuscripts (1981, p. 108). This would be extremely important if it could be shown to be true; it would, for example, render problematic the whole tradition which says that both *pāli* and *aṭṭhakathā* were transmitted orally before the 1st century B.C. But I know of no evidence to support the hypothesis: Filliozat's brief discussion, ibid. note 21, is simply an argument from analogy. At one place in the Jātaka, VI 353, the term *pāli* is used of what is clearly an oral (and non-religious) 'text' (cf. von Hinüber (1977, p. 244)).

7 E.g. Norman (1983, p. 1), von Hinüber (1977, p. 243).

8 In this connexion, Frauwallner's speculations on the oral nature of the early tradition are suggestive (1956, pp. 172–177, 189). Although he does not mention this, it seems to me highly probable that the structure he describes, of fixed (though not yet written) 'memorial sentences' fleshed out with freely composed 'oral explanations . . . given not in Pāli but in the local language' was what lay behind the distinction between *pāli* and *aṭṭhakathā*. (We have evidence for this structure in the modern period also: see Finot (1917, p. 41); Somadasa (1987, p. ix); Tambiah (1970, p. 166). This might also have helped to bring about the confusion between *pāli* as a word for 'text' and as the name of a language. (As I hope to show elsewhere, however, I remain quite unconvinced by the overall hypotheses of Frauwallner's work, not least because in the main body of the text he seems quite to forget the oral nature of the early tradition, in arguing for a single text grandly and precisely conceived and organised by 'the author of the *Skandhaka*'.)

9 von Hinüber, (1978, p. 52), gives an example where alternative readings of a word are cited in different manuscripts of a text, one of which calls the alternative reading a *pāṭha*, the other a *pāli*. In two versions of the same commentarial exegesis discussing variant readings, one (Th-a III 201) reads *pāli*, the other *pāṭho* (Pj II 350).

10 Of course, by the time of Buddhaghosa the list of texts had come to be fixed, though not without disagreements (see Norman (1983, p. 9)), and thence *de facto* the term *pāli* was restricted to that list, at least in Ceylon, just as the term *aṭṭhakathā* came only to be used of commentaries on *pāli* texts, others being *ṭīkā*. A number of texts are sometimes said to have been added to the Canon in Burma: The *Sutta-saṅgaha, Netti-pakaraṇa, Peṭakopadesa, Milindapañha* (see Oldenberg (1882, p. 61); Bode (1909, p. 5); Duroiselle (1911, p. 121), who disagreed with Bode; Ñāṇamoli (1962, p. xii); and Bollée (1969, p. 494), who says that King Mindon's stone edition of the *tipiṭaka* contains the last three of these texts, as does the modern *Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana* edition). The word *pāli* is used of the *Sutta-saṅgaha* in Burmese manuscripts (Oldenberg (op. cit., p. 80); Fausbøll (1896, p. 31)). The *Netti-pakaraṇa*, which itself claims to have been composed by Mahākaccāna, praised by the Buddha and recited at the first Council (Nett 193), is called by its commentary a *pāli* (Nett, Intro. p. XI; see also Ñāṇamoli, op. cit., p. xi); and the commentary is classed as an *aṭṭhakathā* by the *Gandhavaṃsa* (p. 60). For the use of *pāli* in relation to the complex issue of the 'canonical' verses of the Jātaka, in opposition to the non-canonical and commentarial prose passages, see, for example, the references given by Fausbøll in Ja VII p. III, and the comments of Bollée (1970) Preface. In the commentary to the *Nidāna-kathā*, a prose section is referred to as a *pāli*, and an account of its *attha* is given (Ja 17).

11 One philosopher of religion has recently referred to the ('Eastern') 'Religions of the Baskets', in opposition to the ('Western') 'Religions of the Book': see Clark (1986), p. 16, etc.

12 Tedesco, (1952, p. 209), suggests that it might not be.

13 At Sp 20–21 Buddhaghosa explains the term as meaning either 'learning' (*pariyatti*) or 'a container' (*bhājana*), and says that the two senses are to be taken together in understanding, e.g. the term *Vinaya-piṭaka*. For remarks on the use of *piṭaka* in the title of the (canonical but probably post-Aśokan) *Cariyāpiṭaka*, see Horner (1975) Cp Preface pp. iii foll.

14 *Piṭaka-sampadā* and *-sampadāna*, both meaning 'expertise in a tradition' are used in this way of the tradition of learning Vedic mantras (M II 169) and in a general sense, as in the famous *Kālāma Sutta* (A I 189 foll.) and elsewhere (e.g. M I 520; A II 191 foll.).

15 For inscriptions, see Lamotte (1958, pp. 163–64, 347–50), where the chronology is not clearly described (see Schopen (1985) pp. 10–11); the word *tipeṭakī* occurs in the *Parivāra* (Vin V 3), an 'appendix' to the *Vinaya* included in the canon but usually taken to have been produced in Ceylon in the 1st century A.D. The same date is often given for the occurrence of *tepiṭakaṃ buddhavacanaṃ* and *tepiṭako* in the *Milindapañha* (pp. 18, 90), although the dating of this text is far from easy: see Horner (1963, pp. xxi foll), Norman (1983, pp. 110–11).

16 See Norman (1983, pp. 96–97). Individuals could, of course, become expert in all three branches.

17 This is perhaps an appropriate place to deal with a well-known, but very problematic text, the passage of the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (D II 123 foll., found also as a separate *sutta* at A I 167 foll.), dealing with the 'Four Appeals to Authority' (*cattāro mahāpadesā*) Here the Buddha is made to say that if a monk claims to have 'heard' (*sutaṃ*) and 'received' (*paṭiggahītaṃ*) from himself, the Saṅgha, a group of monks or a single monk, that 'this is *dhamma*, this is *vinaya*, this is the Teacher's Doctrine' (*satthu sāsanaṃ*), then what he says (*tāni padavyañjanāni*) is to be compared with the

Sutta and *Vinaya*. It is true that, coming at the end of his life, we might be expected to assume that most of these two bodies of Teaching had by then been given; but it strains credulity to imagine that what is in question here is a straightforward checking of one 'text' against a known and fixed body of such texts, collected as the *Sutta*- and *Vinaya-piṭakas*. There would be a logical problem here of self-reference: according to its own criterion, this text itself could not be accepted, since at the time of its utterance it could not yet have been included in such fixed *piṭakas*, as could not all the other texts, including the *Mahāparinibbāna* itself, said to have been composed after the Buddha's death. Perhaps more seriously, it is quite unclear, to me at least, exactly what is the force of the terms I have paraphrased as 'to be compared': *otāretabbāni* and *sandassetabbāni*. Perhaps the most obvious way to take them is in the sense of a general conceptual and practical agreement (in 'spirit' as opposed to 'letter'). This is the way the *Netti-pakaraṇa* (pp. 21–22) interprets the *Sutta*. As the Buddha says elsewhere, 'those things ('doctrines', 'states of mind', *dhamme*) which you know lead to ... *nibbāna* you may preserve (*dhāreyyāsi*) as the *dhamma*, the *vinaya*, the Teacher's Doctrine' (*satthu sāsana*) (A IV 143). (See MacQueen (1981, pp. 314–15) on these texts.) But this leads one immediately to a non-specific, non-historicist interpretation of what dhamma and vinaya are, which would argue very much against either the existence or the desirability of a fixed collection of texts. (See further text below, and notes 22–24, discussing Aśoka's edict and A IV 162–66.)

18 For example, in Buddhaghosa's introduction to the *Samantapasādikā*; but note that he also says here that the *Vinaya-piṭaka* contains material not recited at the First Council (*pathamasaṅgītiyaṃ saṅgītañ ca asaṅgītañ ca* (Sp 18; cp. Sv 17); see also note 11 above). I suspect that the adjective *tipiṭakin*, when used in commentarial narratives not directly on the subject of the scriptures, often does not refer to those (presumably fairly rare) monks who had actually themselves memorised the entire corpus, but rather to that part of the Order whose allegiance was explicitly to the Mahāvihārin orthodoxy of the *Tipiṭaka*, as opposed both to those who used other texts, and to those ascetics and holy men in the yellow robe whose religious practice, and hence popular appeal, tended not to rely on books and the institutions which housed them, but on broader, less predictable and hence less controllable spiritual achievements. Arguing for this, however, must await another occasion.

19 In writing of this term and its meaning, I have learned most from George Bond's rich and sympathetic treatments (e.g. 1975, 1982), and from MacQueen (1981) and McDermott (1984).

20 Examples: *buddhavacana* at Vin IV 54, Th 403 (these seem to be the earliest uses; cf. also Mil 17); *bhagavato vacana* at A IV 163, 164; *buddhabhāsita* at Vin IV 15; *buddhassa sāsana* at Thī 202 et freq., Th 639; *buddhasāsana* at Dh 368, 381; *satthusāsana* at Vin I 12, D I 110, etc.; *tathāgata-bhāsita* at S II 267, A I 72.

21 The Bhabrā inscription, cited from Bloch (1950, p. 154).

22 The quotation is from the *A dhyāśayasaṃcodana Sūtra*, cited in Śāntideva's *Śikṣāsamuccaya* (I 15): *yatkiṃcinmaitreya subhāṣitaṃ sarvaṃ tadbuddhabhāṣitam.* Gomez (87a, see also 87b) provides a lucid overview of the different Buddhist attitudes to 'the Buddha's word', making reference a number of times to the issue of historicist and non-historicist hermeneutical strategies.

23 This is discussed by both MacQueen (1981, p. 314) and McDermott (1984, pp. 28–30).

24 The argument first put forward by Rhys Davids and Oldenberg (1885, pp. xxxii–xxxvi) must, I think, still stand: the *Vinaya* texts give minutely detailed accounts of the daily life of the monkhood, but although writing is certainly known in them, we never read, even obliquely, of monks writing scriptures or reading manuscripts. It is true that, as Gregory Schopen showed in the last volume of this journal (Vol. XIII,

1989), we cannot be sure that because something is not in the Pāli *Vinaya*, it did not exist. All other extant *Vinayas* apart from the Pāli contain rules concerning *stūpas*; but his close reading of passages from the *Vinaya* itself, as well as from later Pāli and Sinhalese texts, suggests the strong possibility that in fact it did originally contain such rules. In the case of writing, however, none of the extant *Vinayas* describes monks as writing the scriptures, and so despite the fact that the argument is one from silence, and although it was originally based on the Pāli *Vinaya* alone, it has been supported by the discovery of other traditions. Brough (1962, pp. 28–29, 218 foll.) argues for the likelihood of a manuscript tradition of the verses now known as the *Dharmapada* (*Dhammapada*) earlier than the redaction of the Pāli version; although individually the examples of textual relationships he cites to prove 'a very early written transmission' seem to me less than compelling, common sense would suggest that the transition from oral to written would be gradual and piecemeal, rather than sudden and dramatic as the Chronicles' accounts tell us.

25 The most recent brief account is Prebish (1987), with bibliography.

26 The Bhabrā inscription cited above mentions seven texts, of which some have been identified with sections of the last two vaggas of the *Sutta-Nipāta*. See Lamotte (1958, pp. 256–59).

27 Norman (1983, pp. 7–11) is a succinct survey; for a lengthier consideration of the evidence see Norman (1978).

28 This fact renders futile, in my opinion, the work of those scholars who imagine that anything found in the Canon must be grist for the mill of 'early Buddhism', while anything in the commentaries is 'later' and therefore to be ignored in our search for the 'original Buddhism'. The fact is that the same tradition, at the same time and in the same place, has simultaneously preserved for us both the canon as we have it and the commentaries. No doubt, as said earlier (note 5), some judgements of relative chronology can be made on the basis of the internal evidence of these texts; but such judgements are always risky and piecemeal.

29 See Gunawardana (1979, pp. 7–37).

30 Three extant texts have been claimed to be Abhayagiri productions: the *Upālipariprc-chā-sūtra*, which is said to have replaced the *Parivāra* of the Mahāvihārin *Vinaya* (see Stache-Rosen (1984), pp. 28 foll, with Bechert's Introduction pp. 11 foll., and Norman's review (1985)); and two later texts, the *Vimuttimagga* (see Norman (1983, pp. 113–14)) and the *Saddhammopāyana* (see Saddhātissa (1965, pp. 32–33, 59–64); Bechert (1976, p. 29 note 2); Norman (1983, pp. 159–60)).

31 With the exception of a reference to an *Uttaravihāra-mahāvaṃsa* at Mhv-ṭ 134 (and assuming the Uttara-vihāra and the Abhayagiri-vihāra are identical), no texts are attributed directly to the Abhayagiri group in the commentaries. Other works, including a *vetulla-piṭaka* (variously spelt: see text and note 40 below) are named in commentaries and said to be *abuddha-vacana*: at Sv 566 and Mp III 160 the *Guḷha-vessantara, Guḷha-ummagga, Guḷha-vinaya*, and *vedalla-piṭaka* are to be rejected since 'they do not conform with the Suttas' (*na sutte otaranti*, a phrase in the *Mahāpadesa Sutta*, here being commented on in both places). Sp 742 and Spk II 201–202 (for the *ṭīkā* on this passage see Cousins (1972, p. 160)) add to these names the *Vaṇṇa-piṭaka, A ṅgulimāla-piṭaka, Raṭṭhapāla-gajjita*, and *Ā lavaka-gajjita*. The *Nikāya-saṃgraha* (Fernando (1908, pp. 9–10)) lists these texts and others, assigns their composition to various schools in India, and says that only some came to Ceylon; these included the *vaitulya piṭaka* which it later says was adopted by the Abhayagirivihāra-vāsins. Adikaram, (1946, pp. 98–100), discusses these texts, and attempts to find versions in Chinese. It may be, as Rāhula suggests (1956, p. 90), that in the later period the term *vaitulya* came to be used in a general way to refer to any 'dissenting views and new interpretations not acceptable to the Mahāvihāra'. The commentary on the

Mahāvaṃsa mentions an *Uttaravihāra-aṭṭhakathā* several times: see Geiger (1908, pp. 47 foll.); Malalasekera (1935, vol. 1 pp. lxv–lxvii). The commentaries often discuss alternative views and interpretations, which may have been those of the Abhayagiri commentaries: see De Silva (1970, vol. 1 p. lxvii foll.); Mori (1988).

32 The change can be clearly seen by comparing the accounts in the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa*, written in the 4th and 5th centuries, with those of the *Nikāyasaṅgraha* (in Fernando (1908, pp. 10–11)) and *Saddhamma-saṃgaha* (Chapter 6, JPTS (1890) pp. 46–50), written in the 14th.

33 It seems natural to take both *piṭakattayapāliṃ* and *aṭṭhakathaṃ* as governed by *likhāpayuṃ* as well as *ānesuṃ*; and so we have both 'Canon' and Commentary written down for the first time together.

34 Gombrich (1988, p. 152). The commentary to the *Mahāvaṃsa* (Mhv-ṭ 623) rather surprisingly glosses *hāniṃ* as 'the decline in mindfulness and wisdom of beings whose length of life is diminished in the Kali-age' (or perhaps simply '(that) unlucky time') *kalikāle parihīṇāyukasattānaṃ sati-buddhiparihāniṃ*).

35 The main texts used are Mv XXXIII 37 foll., Mp I 92–93, Vibh-a 445 foll.; the account at Mp I 92–93 uses the name Caṇḍālatissa but seems to be the same story. (See Malalasekara (1938) s.vv. Caṇḍālatissa-mahābhaya and Brahmaṇatissa-cora.)

36 Both Adikaram and Rāhula give as an example of the threat posed 'during this period' by the famine the statement that only one monk was alive who knew the *Mahāniddesa*. The version of this story in the PTS edition of the *Samantapasādikā* (695–96) indicates the time of the tale simply by saying *mahābhaye*. I do not see why this has to be read as 'in the Great Famine', referring specifically to this period; it could just mean 'in a famine' or more simply 'in (a time of) great danger'.

37 The earlier accounts do not mention the place of the writing down of the texts; from the 13th and 14th centuries onward, in the *Pūjāvaliya* and *Nikāya-saṃgraha* (see Norman (1983, p. 11)) and the *Sāra-* or *Sārattha-saṅgaha* (see Jayawickrama (1968, pp. 82–83) and Norman (1983, 173)) arises the tradition, so often found in modern secondary works, that this took place far from the capital at Alu- or Āloka-vihāra near modern Matale in central Ceylon. If this was so, Adikaram (1946, p. 79) may be right to suggest that the location, and the fact that it took place under the patronage of a local chieftain rather than the king, afford further evidence that the development is to be seen in the light of Vaṭṭagāminī's patronage of the Abhayagiri monks. This idea is supported by the fact that the *Saddhamma-saṃgaha*, which re-writes the tale by giving the king a leading role in the story, has the 'Council', as it is there called, take place in a hall which he had built specially for the occasion in the Mahāvihāra itself at Anurādhapura (Saddhamma-s Chapter 6 p. 48).

38 The *Nikāyasaṅgraha* (Fernando (1908, pp. 12–13)) tells us that in the reign of king Vohārikatissa (269–291) the Abhayagiri monks 'adopted the Vaitulyan Piṭaka' (on this term see text below), and that the king subsequently 'suppressed [this] heresy'. Bechert (1976, pp. 43 foll. and 1977, p. 364) has argued that Mahāyāna literature was written before this time, the only extant example being the *Buddhāpadāna*, written in the 1st or 2nd century and now included in the Pāli canonical text called the *Apadāna*; he does not suggest that this was specifically an Abhayagiri text, however. As was mentioned above (note 32), the *Nikaya-saṅgraha* describes *vaitulya* texts as coming to Ceylon long before the 3rd century.

39 In his *A bhidharmasamuccaya* Asaṅga says that the terms *vaipulya, vaidalya* and *vaitulya* refer to the same thing, which he also calls the *Bodhisattva-piṭaka* (p. 79, cited in Rāhula (1956, p. 89)). (On this term see also Winternitz (1933, pp. 283, 316)). It is unlikely, and unnecessary, that these terms, a number of variants of which occur in the Pāli sources, should have had any more precise denotation than does the general term 'Mahāyāna', which refers not to one or more specific Nikāyas in the

Buddhist legal sense, but to a general tendency in Buddhist religion. The classic discussion of 'Mahāyānism in Ceylon' is Paranavitana's article with that title (1928); for recent discussion see Rāhula (1956, pp. 89–90), Norman (1978, pp. 40–41), Bechert (1976) and (1977).

40 This is perhaps most evident in the *Nikāya-saṅgraha*.

41 The best survey of the evidence for Buddhaghosa and his activity is Ñāṇamoli (1975, pp. xv–xxvii).

42 Chapter 37 verses 215–46. Buddhaghosa's own *Visuddhimagga* (p. 96) provides a remarkable story expressing the attitudes he encountered at the Mahāvihāra: a monk called Tipiṭaka-Cūlābhaya, who had not learnt the commentaries (*aṭṭhakathaṃ anuggahetvā*) announced that he would give a public discourse on the scriptures (*pañcanikāyamaṇḍale tīṇi piṭakāni parivattessāmi*; later he says *pariyattiṃ parivattessāmi* — it is not clear to me whether this refers simply to a recitation of texts or to commentarial discourses on them, or both). The monks tell him that unless he does so according to the understanding of their own teachers (*attano ācariyuggahaṃ*) they will not let him speak. He then goes to his Preceptor, who asks for an example: 'how do the teachers say (or "explain") this passage?' (*idaṃ padaṃ kathaṃ vadanti*). Although the monk then gives the passage correctly, his Preceptor simply grunts (*hun ti*); he then gives it twice more, each time differently (*aññena aññena pariyāyena*), but his Preceptor merely grunts again, and then explains: 'your first version follows the way of the Teachers, but because you have not learnt it from them in person, you could not establish that it is their version' (*tayā paṭhamaṃ kathito yeva ācariyamaggo, ācariyamukhato pana anuggahitattā evaṃ ācariyā vadantī ti saṇṭhātuṃ nāsakkhi*).

43 This parallelism has already been noted and discussed by McDermott (1984).

44 Surveys of early historiography in India and Ceylon are found in chapters by Majumdar, Perera, Warder and Godakumbara in Philips (ed.) (1961), Pathak (1966) Chapter 1, Bechert (1969) and Warder (1972, Chapters 3–5).

45 See Perera (op. cit. in previous note). Malalgoda (1970, pp. 431–32) has usefully compared this attitude to that of ancient Israel; while there are of course many disanalogies, I might add that this attitude has often been connected with the growth of an historical consciousness in Israel.

46 Bechert (1978, p. 1).

47 See Geiger (1908, Chapter 2), Norman (1983, pp. 114–18); and note 32 above.

48 I am drawing specifically on Goody (1977) Chapter 4, 'What's in a list?', and especially Smith (1982) Chapter 3, 'Sacred Persistence: Toward a Redescription of Canon'. For interesting and relevant remarks on the Judaic and Christian 'canons' see Barr (1983), esp. Chapter 3, 'The concept of canon and its modern adventures'.

49 It is not surprising that there are also a number of *vaṃsa* texts devoted wholly or in part to recounting the history of relics and their possession: e.g. the *Dāṭhavaṃsa, Thūpavaṃsa, Cha-kesa-dhātu-vaṃsa, Jina-kāla-mālī*.

50 The term 'scripturalism' was first used in this way by Clifford Geertz (1968), and has been applied to Theravāda by Tambiah (1976) and Bond (1988). I think that this application is very fruitful, but less so when it is generalised to refer to the premodern period, as both Tambiah and Bond do. In Theravāda countries, as in the Islam of Indonesia and Morocco described by Geertz, it is most helpful to use the term to refer to a religious attitude arising as a reaction to a wide range of phenomena in the experience of colonialism and modernity: the downgrading of localised supernaturalism, the cultural prestige and practical power of western science, the centralization and bureaucratisation of power, the establishment of a 'secular' educational system, printing presses, and the resulting value placed on literacy. The search for indigenous resources to combat foreign dominance led, amongst other things, to an emphasis on

the noble ideals of the early texts: their teachings are abstract and universal as opposed to localised, 'rational' and 'ethical' as opposed to magical, and fit better with the placing of cultural and political authority in the institutions of bureaucracy and education than do the personalised spiritual interactions of localism. This concatenation of phenomena is, of course, specific to the modern world; and the comparative insight which can be gained from using Geertz's term to describe the Buddhist case seems to me to be lost when it is generalised to become an overall category applicable to all historical periods.

51 Hence the recurring notion of the need for 'purification' of the Saṃgha by kings. For the influence of Ceylonese Theravāda, in its post-Parakkamabāhu 'unified' form, on mainland Southeast Asia see Keyes (1977, pp. 80–81; 1987, pp. 32–33). One example of the relevance, at least at the level of legend and ideological legitimation, of the possession of the Canon can be found in the story of the introduction of Theravāda to his kingdom by the Burmese King Anuruddha (1044–77). (This is, of course, before Parakkamabāhu I.) As Luce says (1969, pp. 18–19), although the Chronicles 'at first seem hopelessly confused', 'all are agreed that he was a champion of Buddhism, whose main purpose was to secure copies of the Tipiṭaka and Relics of the Buddha'. In the various versions of the story recounted by the *Sāsana-vaṃsa* (pp. 56–65), for example, the legitimatory knowledge and possession of the Buddha's 'true' teaching, as embodied in the canonical texts, is a central theme, and is opposed to the practices of 'false ascetics'. (This is probably a reference to the practices and influence of the Ari.) Thus the texts, and certain relics, become emblems of orthodoxy, as Bechert's recent summary of the story has it (1984, p. 148): 'The Burmese chronicles report that Anuruddha was converted by a Mon monk called Shin Arahan, but that there were no copies of the holy scriptures and no relics in Pagan. The Mon king refused the Burmese king's request for a copy of the holy scriptures and some relics. It is unlikely that this was the real reason for war as the texts claim; Anuruddha at any rate conquered Thaton in 1057, took the Mon king captive, and brought him, his family and many monks and skilled workmen to his capital Pagan, together with manuscripts of the sacred scriptures of Theravāda Buddhism. With them Mon culture and Theravāda Buddhism reached the Burmese. The supremacy of the Tantric monks was now broken, and though their doctrine survived for a time, particularly in the border territories of Burma, their influence diminished steadily while orthodox thought soon prevailed in all parts of the country'. The *Sāsana-vaṃsa* informs us (p. 63) that the king had the relics installed in a jewelled basket and the texts kept in a jewelled palace. There has, naturally, been much discussion of the historical validity of the Chronicles' accounts: See Harvey (1925, pp. 23–34), Luce (1969, Chapter 2), Htin Aung (1970, Chapter 6). It is certain, however, that the Theravāda tradition gradually replaced what we now call 'Mahāyānist' forms of Buddhism: see, for example, Luce (1969, Chapter 10).

52 See Bechert and Hartmann (1988), Kloppenborg (1977), Tiwari (1983).

53 Much of this literature is called 'Mahāyānist', although again I doubt the usefulness of the term. To the references given in note 40 for the early phase, add also Mudiyanse (1967, Chapter 2) and Schopen (1982). J.S. Strong's forthcoming work on Upagupta will detail the extensive presence in Southeast Asian ritual and indigenous literature (and at least one text in Pāli: see Denis (1977)) of this figure derived from the Sanskrit Sarvāstivāda tradition. F. Bizot's striking reports from the 'unreformed' Mahānikay monasteries of Cambodia show texts and practices which can without much hesitation be called tantric: see Bizot (1976, 1979, 1981).

54 Evidence for this in early 19th century Ceylon can be found in Upham (1833, vol. 3 pp. 167–215, 267), for early 20th century Laos in Finot (1917) (cf. Lafont (1962, p. 395 note 1)), and recently for Thailand by Tambiah (1968). Evidence from cata-

logues of manuscripts from Ceylon suggests that the contents of the *tipiṭaka* have circulated in the same way as, and alongside, a great deal of other literature: both canonical and non-canonical materials, for example, have often been written in the same manuscript. (See de Zoysa (1875, 1885), Wickremasinghe (1900), Gunasena (1901), de Silva (1938), Godakumbara (1980) Somadasa (1987, 1989)).

Evidence for earlier historical periods may be difficult to collect. But as an example of the kind of evidence we need, I cite a list of four kinds of text mentioned in the commentaries (Ps II 264, Mp V 96–97, identical passages commenting on the same *sutta*). It is said that when young monks do not show special respect for their elders, they do not receive help from them, either materially, by not being provided with robes, bowl, etc., and not being nursed when weak or ill, or in relation to *dhamma*: the latter is explained as their not being taught *pāḷiṃ vā aṭṭhakathaṃ vā dhammakathābandhaṃ vā guḷhaganthaṃ vā*. It is not certain what either of the latter two terms refers to. Adikaram (1946, p. 98) remarks of the former that 'perhaps it included books that formed the basis of the later *ṭīkās* [sub-commentaries] or [narrative] works like the *Rasavāhinī*'. It might also refer to books containing texts used in preaching, as in the modern Sinhalese *baṇa* books. If so, then like the latter, such compilations would have included canonical and non-canonical material (some of the most famous stories in the Buddhist world, such as that of Kisā-gotamī, being found in commentarial literature). *Guḷhagantha* seems to mean 'secret books'; not surprisingly, perhaps, it is not clear what they were. The lists of 'heretical', *Vaitulya* works cited earlier (note 32) contain titles with *guḷha-* as a prefix; but I think it is unlikely that in the contexts here being discussed, we are dealing with an 'esoteric' literature in the Tantric sense. In the later Pali tradition we find works with *guḷha* in the title, and they seem be elucidations of difficult passages in the *Vinaya* and *A bhidhamma* (see Malalasekera (1938, vol. 1 p. 781, vol. 2 p. 883); Bode (1909, pp. 18, 56)). The *Visuddhimagga* (pp. 115–16) contains a very similar passage, but does not mention *dhammakathābandha*; the commentary (cited in Ñāṇamoli (1975, p. 119 note 35)) explains *guḷhagantha* as 'meditation-subject books dealing with the truths, the dependent origination, etc., which are profound and associated with voidness'. So it would seem that *guḷhagantha* in this case refers to a class of sophisticated and technical literature on specialist topics.

55 Writing of 'traditional Buddhist culture' in Thailand, Keyes (1987, p. 179) has said that 'three texts — or, more properly, several versions of three texts — define for most Thai Buddhists today, as in traditional Siam, the basic parameters of a Theravadin view of the world': they are the 'Three Worlds according to Phra Ruang' (see Reynolds (1982)), the *Phra Mali* (a 15th century composition based on a Ceylonese story called the *Maleyya-Sutta*), and the *Vessantara-Jātaka*. Only the last of these has a canonical version. This generalisation, he says (p. 181), applies to both popular and elite traditions.

56 Interestingly, one of the reasons for the frequent appearance of *Abhidhamma* texts in monasteries in Laos and Cambodia, where the *Vinaya-* and especially the *Sutta-piṭakas* are comparatively infrequent, is the fact that these texts are used for funeral recitation: the seven texts of the *Abhidhamma* collection correspond to the seven days of the week (J.S. Strong, personal communication; cf Bizot (1981, pp. 10 foll.)).

57 Thus I think that what Bizot says of Cambodia is true of the whole Theravāda world: 'the term [*tipiṭaka*] refers less to a collection of texts than to an ideological concept' (1976, p. 21).

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5

PALI ORAL LITERATURE

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1. The *nikāyas* as oral literature

Early Buddhist literature is an oral literature. Such a literature is not without its own characteristic features. A widespread use of mnemonic formulae is one of the most typical of these. I would refer to the considerable body of research on the nature of oral epic poetry.[1] In such poetry the formulae are used both as an aid to actual performance and to maintain the continuity and form of the epic tradition.

Both these features are certainly present in the *sutta* literature.[2] In the first place many suttas are clearly designed for chanting. We should assume that, then as now, their chanting would produce a great deal of religious emotion — the *pāmojja* and *pīti-somanassa* of the texts. The difference of course would be that the language of the suttas would still be directly comprehensible to the hearers. In these circumstances suttas would be chanted by individual monks both for edification and for enjoyment. We may compare the recitations attributed to Ananda and Upali in accounts of the First Council. In practice they would have to be tailored to the needs of the particular situation — shortened or lengthened as required. An experienced chanter would be able to string together many different traditional episodes and teachings so as to form a coherent, profound and moving composition.

It has been clearly shown that in many cases a traditional oral singer does not have a fixed text for a particular song. He can for example be recorded on two different occasions. The result may vary greatly in length. He will insist that he has sung the same song. In fact his viewpoint is quite reasonable and in many ways defensible. If one is asked to recount an incident which has taken place, one may tell the story very briefly to someone met on the street and at much greater length to someone else over lunch. One might well not admit that the account of the matter was different on the two occasions, although the length of the story would certainly differ. Of course in practice a tape recorder might very easily show that the two versions were to some extent inconsistent or contradictory.

There is more to it than this; for an epic singer might reply that all the material in both songs was traditional apart from a little ornamentation. 'But,' says the historian, 'only in the second version did the Sultan travel via Dubrovnik. You have invented this and falsified history.' 'Not so,' says the singer. 'It is normal for heroes to travel via Dubrovnik. Many songs tell of this.' It is easy to see that such an approach is un-historical. Nevertheless we should note that it is an extremely traditional and conservative approach. The important thing is to preserve the matter of tradition. The application of this in a given situation may vary greatly and *should do*. The measure of the experience, talent and versatility of the performer is his capacity so to adapt his material.

The sutta literature shows all the marks of such an approach. It is quite evident that if we compare the Pali recension of the nikayas with other surviving versions, the differences we find are exactly those we might expect to discover between different performances of oral works. The titles tend to change, the location may alter, material is abridged here, expanded there. Even within the existing canon we find a great deal of this kind of thing. Indeed the four great nikayas often read as if they were simply different performances of the same material. Many of the episodes of a composition such as the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* are to be found scattered over the other three nikayas, often more than once.

The tradition itself was far from unaware of this and the problems raised by it. The Mahaparinibbana-sutta in fact preserves an account of the four *mahā-padesa*, also found as a separate discourse in the *Anguttara-nikāya*.[3] *Apadesa* signifies the pointing out or citing of someone as a witness or authority — in this case for some teaching. The four which are cited are the Buddha, a community with elders, several learned monks and just one learned elder. The passage rejects the decisiveness of the appeal to such authorities. It proposes instead that those phrases and syllables should be carefully learnt and then brought into sutta and compared with *vinaya*. If they do not enter into sutta and they do not match with vinaya, they should be rejected. In the converse case they should be accepted as the utterance of the Lord. A rather developed situation is obviously envisaged with established residence of communities and monks in settled abodes.

Obviously in such an oral tradition with a widespread body of monks and a considerable oral literature problems of authenticity are bound to arise. The procedure envisaged here is interesting. If something does not match with vinaya (*vinaye sandissanti*), it should be rejected. This suggests an established and relatively defined set of vinaya rules such as we know to have existed from the comparative study of surviving vinaya works of various schools. Similarly something should be rejected if it does not enter into sutta (*sulle otaranti*). This is an unusual expression; it is best interpreted in the light of the *Peṭakopadesa* tradition where *otaraṇā* is one of the sixteen *hāras*.[4]

It may there be taken as a particular method of exegesis which links a given discourse into the teaching as a whole by means of one of the general categories

of the teaching. The Petakopadesa in fact specifies six possibilities: aggregates, elements, spheres, faculties, truths, dependent origination.[5] Any of these can be used to analyse the content of a discourse and their use will automatically place it in its context in the teaching as a whole. Something on these lines, if perhaps a little less defined, is surely intended in the mahapadesa passages.

What is envisaged for sutta is not then a set body of literature, but rather a traditional pattern of teaching. Authenticity lies not in historical truth although this is not doubted, but rather in whether something can accord with the essential structure of the *dhamma* as a whole. If it cannot, it should be rejected. If it can, then it is to be accepted as the utterance of the Buddha. We may compare from the later commentarial tradition: 'Whosoever ... might teach and proclaim the dhamma, all of that is accounted as actually taught and proclaimed by the Teacher.'[6]

Obviously there are dangers to the maintenance of the continuity of an oral tradition. Indeed the sutta tradition assumes that it will not prove possible to maintain it in the long run. The *saddhamma* will eventually decline and finally disappear, to await rediscovery by a future Buddha. Such an awareness is of course likely to provoke attempts to delay or prolong the decline. A present day example of this is of course U Narada's assiduous promulgation of the *Paṭṭhāna* precisely *because* of the commentarial tradition that the loss of the Patthana will initiate the loss of the *Tipiṭaka*.

It may be suggested that a number of ancient attempts were made to fix the tradition, already during the sutta period. One of the earliest of these may have come down to us as the *Saṅgīti-suttanta* of the *Dīgha-nikāya*.[7] This of course consists of mnemonic lists given in groups in ascending numerical order from one to ten; significantly it is attributed not to the Buddha but to Sariputta. It can be viewed as a mnemonic summary of the contents of the nikayas. Many of its lists must derive from suttas found only in the Anguttara-nikāya. It is obviously a work of some authority; it is used as the basis for one of the seven canonical *abhidharma* works of the *Sarvāstivāda*.[8] So far as I know, it has not actually been suggested that it may well have been recited at one of the Councils. Yet its name clearly indicates that it is intended for chanting together and this surely means at a *Saṅgīti*.

If this is correct, it is not surprising that it could be referred to as a recital of the dhamma and seen as referring to the nikayas at large. From one point of view this is hardly false if the Sangiti-suttanta is seen as a summary work or mnemonic index. One might venture rather tentatively to suggest that the Second Council would seem particularly appropriate. This does seem to have been a period in which an attempt was being made to define some aspects of the tradition more precisely.[9] Even if the tradition of the Councils which we have is rejected in toto, it would still seem that the procedure of holding a Sangiti to chant together the dhammavinaya is firmly fixed in oral consciousness. Presumably this has some historical basis. Perhaps then the Sangiti-suttanta is the best evidence we have as to what one such council actually did?

The process of organizing for mnemonic purposes did not stop here. Other individual suttas developed later for the same purposes, most notably the *Dasuttara-suttanta*.[10] The folk genre of riddle and answer was also utilized.[11] On a larger scale the actual structuring of the nikaya collections shows evidence of the same concern. If we consider the division of the first two collections into long and medium discourses and recall the commentarial references to the different views on certain matters of the two schools of *Dīghabhāṇakas* and *Majjhimabhāṇakas*, this distinction on grounds of size seems rather remarkable. At first sight it is difficult to see how it could have arisen. However if we consider the matter from the standpoint of oral performance, it becomes clearer. What we have is schools of monks specializing in recitals of different lengths. The convenience of this is obvious — one could invite a particular monk or group of monks according to the length of chanting required. One length would be appropriate for an *uposatha* day or for the occasion of some *saṅgha* meeting. Another length would perhaps be more suitable for an evening event. Such considerations might also account for some differences of content e.g. the great mythic and ritual suttas of the long collection.

Every monk would need a stock of small pieces for chanting when visiting the sick or for recitation after receiving food at the house of a layman. So we have no school of *Cūḷabhāṇakas*. The corresponding material does of course exist; it is this which has been collected or rather organized into the third and fourth nikayas. These have been arranged according to mnemonic principles. The Anguttaranikaya follows a straightforward numerical approach. This is not as unsophisticated as might appear at first sight; we should no doubt assume that numerological symbolism of some kind is involved. The *Saṃyutta-nikāya* adopts the alternative method of trying to establish groups of mnemonically linked discourses arranged in five larger meaningful sections. In some places therefore it tries to develop interconnections based upon the structure of the dhamma, but often it is satisfied with a simple mnemonic link or mere association of ideas.

Both these collections are however clearly oral compositions. We may suppose that after the original introduction of these two organizational methods they were continued in the tradition and probably did not take an absolutely fixed form until the specific occasion on which they were set in writing. In fact one might expect a considerable transitional period with both oral and literary approaches remaining concurrent. No doubt the oral tradition had by this time become rather fixed in comparison to the earlier period. Even so we should assume that the same monk would not have set a given work down in writing in the same way on two successive occasions.

This model of the development of the nikaya literature is well in accord with the historical evidence. The kind of divergence and variation in the oral tradition suggested here is not simply an inference from the pattern of most but not all forms of oral literature so far studied.[12] It has a much firmer basis. It is precisely this kind of variation which is actually found in the different versions of the four

nikayas preserved by various sects and extant today in Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan. These divergences are typically greatest in matters of little importance — such items as the locations of suttas, the names of individual speakers or the precise order of occurrence of events. Only very rarely are they founded on doctrinal or sectarian differences. They are too frequent to arise from the natural variation of a manuscript tradition or even from a rigidly memorized oral tradition. Yet the works concerned are clearly not independent compositions. They are very similar in their substantive content.

This kind of divergence must go back to an early period, probably the time of the first sectarian divisions of the Buddhist community or soon thereafter. By contrast there is much less divergence *within* the later *Theravādin* and *Sarvāstivādin* traditions. Evidently by the time of the later canonical abhidharma works in these two schools the precise content of the nikayas had become much more firmly fixed. This would suggest a subsequent stage in the development of oral tradition in which a relatively rigid memorization becomes established due to the religious authority of the works in question. There is evidence to suggest that this has occasionally taken place in other oral literatures.[13]

2. The rise of *abhidhamma*

The later tradition describes the difference between the sutta and *abhidhamma* methods in several ways. One of the oldest is perhaps to distinguish the first as *pariyāya-desanā* and the second as *nippariyāya-desanā*. This distinction appears to be first recorded in the Anguttara.[14] Two *vaggas* are almost completely given over to it. Significantly these suttas are nearly all attributed to Ananda and Udayin. The first serves as the model for the others. The formulaic phrase '*sambādhe okāsādhigamo*' is taken as a base. The sensory realm is seen as the crowded or oppressive place, while the first *jhāna* is the open space or opportunity. The first jhana is then a crowded place in relation to the second jhana and so on. Each of these statements is qualified as *pariyāyena*. The final stage of *arahat*-ship 'was referred to by the Lord as obtaining room in a crowded place *nippariyāyena*'. The series of suttas which follows applies the same distinction using other phrases and also a series of synonyms for *nibbāna*.

It is possible to interpret the intended difference in several ways. It is sometimes taken as the distinction between something which requires further exposition for clarity and something which does not need any further explanation. This is very similar to another commentarial differentiation: sutta describes such things as the aggregates in part (*eka-desen'eva*), while abhidhamma explains them in full (*nippadesena*), i.e. not restricting its explanation to a single aspect.[15] Often however, pariyaya seems to indicate a particular arrangement of the teaching for some particular purpose — tantamount to a skilful means of teaching.[16]

Such a distinction implies that the second way is in some sense higher or more direct: the teaching in itself rather than the teaching in application. The

early abhidhamma literature does not explicitly make such a claim, but it certainly contrasts abhidhamma and *suttantika* methods. Presumably, the very use of the term abhidhamma must be intended to claim some higher or distinct teaching.

The nature of the difference can perhaps be indicated more precisely from the contents of the earlier abhidhamma works. The key feature is, I think, that these works seek to describe specific events or occasions using the categories which the suttas rather employ to refer to sequences or processes. To take an example. The eightfold way is usually intended in the suttas to show the path or process leading to enlightenment. No doubt it was conceived of as cyclic or at any rate as having many levels; not just a linear progression. With the abhidhamma it is seen as existing as part of a single event on particular occasions e.g. at the moment of enlightenment. Prior to that point it would also be present at least in embyro — obviously the states which lead to enlightenment must have some resemblance to the enlightened state itself.

It is this distinction between a sequential and a momentary approach which is the most characteristic difference between sutta and early abhidhamma. In these terms many suttas obviously contain abhidhammic features: it may also be that the *mātikā* were originally simply lists of states present on a given occasion. It is of course quite possible that the proposition that a sequential list could also be interpreted as a momentary list was present from an early stage. In this sense the abhidhamma approach may be older than appears.

It may be suggested that the origin of the abhidhamma literature lies in two converging tendencies. The first would be this shift from a sequential process orientation to a momentary or event orientated standpoint. The second would be the growing need to fix the oral tradition more firmly as the community grew in numbers and geographic dispersal. If lists of momentary states were already current, it would not be difficult to see that such an approach could help to solve the problem of possible divergence from the tradition.

The early abhidhamma works are then an attempt to fix the structure of Buddhist thought in terms of momentary events. After all, given the proposition that sequential teachings are convertible into momentary ones, and given also the complex and structured network of teachings in the later sutta period, it would quite reasonably follow that the whole pattern of Buddhist dhamma would be expressible in momentary terms. Of course there is no reason to suppose that an event would yet be seen as a philosophical point-instant in the way in which it is perhaps conceived in some schools of the later abhidhamma.

From a historical point of view this raises some questions. One would expect such an enterprise to bristle with difficulties. A new formalization of this kind could only be entirely successful if the original was both completely understood and contained no contradictory or incomplete elements. This seems improbable. In the circumstances it is hardly surprising that a number of distinct schools of abhidhamma interpretation arose.

For the tradition of course it would seem otherwise. Indeed if the momentary

approach was already accepted, then the abhidhamma would seem to be doing little more than to bring out the less obvious implications of the teaching. It could be taken for granted that the Buddha would already be aware of them. This is no doubt what the tradition of the commentaries is saying when it attributes the matika and the *naya* to the Buddha and supposes that the actual expansion was made by Sariputta, a figure often used to symbolize wisdom.

3. The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*

A striking feature of the Dhammasangani (Dhs), as also of some other abhidhamma and exegetical works, is the frequent use of standard mnemonic registers of apparent synonyms to define particular mental or material phenomena. The Dhammasangani is both the first and probably also the oldest work in the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*. So the use of these mnemonic registers may well originate here.

The Dhs, itself in the main an oral work, was composed for hearers who would have had a mass of sutta material committed to memory. For such listeners each term in a particular register would recall a number of set contexts and the significance of the dhamma concerned would be in part determined by those contexts. In this way the Dhammasangani could organize the sutta traditions and place them in the wider and more embracing framework of abhidhamma.

It follows that if we are to understand the definitions of terms given in the Dhammasangani, we must reverse the process and seek out the sutta contexts from which the registers are compiled. Of course we cannot assume that the composer of Dhs was familiar with the precise set of sutta material now extant in Pali. It is possible therefore that some of the terms used may refer to sutta contexts no longer in existence or available only in Chinese or Tibetan. The redundancy of much of the material in the Sutta-pitaka should guard against this to a considerable extent; indeed this is obviously part of the purpose of such multiple redundancy in an oral tradition.

Some examples will illustrate this approach. In the register for *vicāra* the term *upavicāra* is obviously based upon the nikaya formula sometimes referred to as the eighteen *manopavicāra*: 'after seeing a visible object with the eye one frequents a visible object which is the basis for pleasant feeling'[17] — the number eighteen is reached by utilizing three types of feeling in conjunction with six senses. A number of examples occur in the register for *paññā*. The term *bhūri* is based upon the interpretation of Dhp 282. *Pariṇāyika* perhaps refers to the seventh treasure of the *cakkavattin* king. *Paññā-sattha* is a reference to the *Vammīka-sutta*.[18] *Paññā-pāsāda* probably refers to the *dhamma-mayam* of the Request of Brahma.[19] The group *paññā-āloka, paññā-obhāsa* and *paññā-pajjota* is clearly based upon A II, 139–40, while *paññā-ratana* must derive from S I, 36–7.

A quite remarkable example is the group *sallakkhaṇā upalakkhaṇā paccupalakkhaṇā* which can only be taken from S III, 261, where these three terms occur in a negative form (*asallakkhaṇā*, etc.) in the titles and content of three

successive suttas. Eight further synonyms for absence of knowledge occur in a similar manner in the same section of the Samyutta-nikaya. All eight are found in the Dhs register for *moha*, although the three previous terms are not found there.[20]

Of course the process would also work in reverse. A preacher coming to a term known to him from a Dhs register in his exegesis of a sutta would be able to expound it accordingly. In this way even a minor reference would enable him to show the structure of the dhamma and thus give a more profound and inspiring significance to the context.

Conclusion

Consideration of the oral nature of the nikayas offers several profitable lines of historical investigation. In the early period it affords the possibility of a strong improvisatory element. This can be confirmed by comparison between the surviving versions derived from different sects. It suggests the gradual fixation of the material at a later period, thus accounting for many features of Pali literature and some aspects of its development. The constraints of oral performance may be a significant factor in the formation of the four great collections. Moreover mnemonic considerations played an important part in their arrangement and structuring.

The development of abhidhamma may then be accounted for in terms of two converging tendencies. In the first place there was a move away from interpreting the traditional formulae of the teaching as sequential processes. Greater emphasis was now placed on understanding many of them as describing particular events. Secondly there was an attempt to fix the structure of the teaching more precisely. This would serve two different purposes. It would both sharpen individual comprehension and insight while at the same time securing more firmly the historical continuity of the tradition. Various devices were used for this purpose, but particular reference may be made to the abhidhamma registers and table of contents as well as to lists expounding the contents of a given state of consciousness.

One striking feature of much oral literature is the way in which formulae are employed in larger themes. This has not been discussed here, but it could well prove fruitful to analyse Pali literature in terms of its thematic structure. This and other approaches derived from consideration of its oral nature could quite possibly advance our understanding of its form and development considerably.

Notes

Abbreviations as in the Critical Pali Dictionary.

1 The Parry-Lord theory of oral literature; see Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, Mass. 1960).

2 As far as I know the application of the above theory to Pali literature has only been

suggested by R. J. Corless: 'The Garland of Love: A History of Religious Hermeneutic of Nembutsu Theory and Practice', in A. K. Narain, *Studies in Pali and Buddhism* (in Honour of Bhikku Jagdish Kashyap) (Delhi 1979, p. 64.
3 D II, 123–6; A II, 167–70; Nett 21; Nett Trsl. p. 37 n.
4 Pet II; 98–101; 157, etc.; Nett 21–2; 63–70; 107; Nett Trsl. pp. xl; 1; 37 n. 125/1.
5 E.g. Pet 98.
6 Mp 1, 123.
7 D III, 207–71.
8 L. de La Vallée Poussin, *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*, reprinted MCB XVI (1971) Vol. I, Introd., p. XLII.
9 Even if it is now clear that the schism between *Mahāsanghika* and *Sthaviravāda* is not connected with the Second Council, it cannot have been long after. I would incline to suppose that it was indeed due to attempts at greater precision in vinaya matters.
10 D III, 272 to end; this is an interesting variation which tries to utilize meaningful mnemonic linking.
11 Khp IV; A V, 50–4; 54–8.
12 J. D. Smith, '*The Singer or the Song*: a Reassessment of Lord's "Oral Theory" *Man* (N.S.) 12 (1977), pp. 141–53.
13 A. B. Lord, 'Perspectives on Recent Work on Oral Literature', in J. J. Duggan, *Oral Literature* (Edinburgh 1975), p. 14 ff.
14 A IV, 449–56.
15 Dhs-a, 2–3, etc.
16 Cf BHSD.
17 D III, 244–5; M III, 216–7; S IV, 232; A I, 176; cf. Vibh, 381.
18 M I, 144.
19 Vin I, 5; D II, 39; M I, 168; S I, 137; It 33.
20 Dhs, 390, etc.

6

THE DATING OF THE HISTORICAL BUDDHA

A review article*

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In the fifteenth century the author of the Blue Annals wrote: "In general (it must be observed) that there exists a great disagreement in the statements of scholars regarding the years of the Birth and Nirvāṇa of the Teacher."[1] Presented with well over a thousand pages on the subject in two volumes (with a third to come), one might be excused for supposing that not much has changed in the last half millennium. In fact that would be somewhat illusory. Even if we have not yet been able to fix the exact dates of the Buddha and Mahāvīra, considerable progress has of course been made, as even a cursory look at the traditional dates of the past makes quite clear.

Within the Eastern Buddhist tradition of China, Vietnam, Korea and Japan (especially the latter two countries) the traditional date for the Mahāparinibbāna (death) of the Buddha was 949 B.C., although a variant giving 878 B.C. is also possible. Earlier and down to the fifth century A.D. a date of 686 B.C. seems to have been fairly common. Although they may in part have been motivated by a desire to place the Buddha earlier in time than Lao-tse, these and other such dates were created by relating such events in the life-story of the Buddha as the earthquakes mentioned in various texts to phenomena found in Chinese records – a clear enough testimony that no very definite chronological information was brought to China by the early Buddhist missionaries.

In the Northern Buddhism of the Tibeto–Mongolian cultural area the Mahāparinibbāna was officially dated to 881 B.C., although other ninth-century dates are also known. This is based upon the, probably mythical, chronology of Shambhala associated with the Kālacakra system. At an earlier stage Tibetan authorities seem to have tended to dates in the twenty-second century B.C., the origin of which is not clear. Both Chinese and Tibetan scholars were, however, well aware that many other dates had been advanced. This is in sharp contrast to the Southern Buddhist tradition, which has retained no memory of

any disagreement over the basic chronology of events since the Buddha's lifetime. (There have of course been slight differences as to the exact moment at which the year one commences.)

The era they preserve places the Buddha's Mahāparinibbāna in 543 B.C. This is certainly much closer than the more widely accepted of the alternatives; so it is not surprising perhaps that it has tended to spread in modern times: it seems to have been adopted in Vietnam and Indonesia as well as by such modern organizations as the World Fellowship of Buddhists. There is some evidence also to suggest that it had been widely accepted in Kashmir, India and Nepal in the last period of Buddhism there (after the twelfth century or earlier).[2]

The volumes reviewed here stem from a conference held near Göttingen in 1988 under the auspices of Heinz Bechert. Indeed the modern revival of interest in this topic is very much to the credit of Bechert who wrote a number of articles on this subject prior to the conference.[3] Undoubtedly, even without the further source materials promised for the final volume, this is a major contribution to research in the field and for a long time to come will be essential for any serious study of pre-Mauryan chronology or early Buddhist history.

In fact these volumes are not limited to the specific question of the date of the Buddha. A proportion (over 120 pages) is devoted to the history of research while another large section (about 60 pages) reprints a number of relevant sources, some of them not otherwise conveniently accessible. A considerable space is in effect devoted to the history of the use of the various chronological systems in particular Buddhist countries. This is certainly of great interest for the history of Buddhism in various areas, but no doubt the greatest interest lies in the papers which relate directly to the dating of the Buddha.

The history of research

A valuable and detailed paper by Sieglinde Dietz surveys the history of research (Symp. II, 2, pp. 11–83). It is clear that from 1687 (Couplet) onwards scholars gradually became aware of the main traditionally-espoused dates and by the beginning of the nineteenth century had, not surprisingly, begun to favour the seemingly more reasonable dating found in the Pali sources which underlie the Southern Buddhist tradition. As these became better known and as the Greek synchronisms which fix the dates of the Mauryan Emperors Candragupta and Aśoka to within a decade or two became more firmly established, problems appeared. Indeed, already in 1836 G. Turnour, the translator of the *Mahāvaṃsa*, recognized that the Pali sources place the Mauryan rulers some sixty years too early.

Subsequently in the course of the nineteenth century a number of dates in the fourth and fifth centuries B.C. were advocated by various scholars, notably a date proposed by T. W. Rhys Davids of "within a few years of 412 B.C." to which we will return. In the last decades of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century, however, a consensus gradually formed that the Buddha

died towards the beginning of the fifth century B.C. – the dates most often cited are 483 or 486 B.C. In part this was because it became clear that the longer dating could be supported by data from the *Purāṇas* and by Jacobi's evaluation of the Jain evidence.

Also important here was a Chinese source: the so-called "Dotted Record" of the fifth century A.D. which seemed to present an independent dating for the Mahāparinibbāna around 486 B.C. Already, as is made clear in Hubert Durt's survey of the Japanese and Korean data, some Japanese scholars had from the eighteenth century onwards begun to favour a date based upon the Dotted Record and information about the Record was communicated to Max Müller as early as 1884 by B. Nanjio. Another paper by Erhard Rosner refers to Yü Cheng-hsieh who in 1813 put forward the first century B.C. for the birth of the Buddha, erroneous no doubt but a clear enough indication of the critical trend developing.

At all events the consensus developed above was to remain overwhelmingly dominant in European[4] and South Asian scholarship for the first half of the twentieth century. I exclude from consideration the more fantastic Indian chronological speculations documented in otherwise interesting papers by Jens-Uwe Hartmann and Gustav Roth. (There are equally fantastic pseudo-historical works in European literature too – e.g. the entertaining books on Atlantis, Mu, etc. by such writers as Donnelly, Churchward, Scott-Elliot and the like – we don't usually treat them in a survey of serious scholarship!) There has been perhaps slightly more variety in Japanese scholarship (surveyed by Hajime Nakamura), but there too the dating of the Buddha's death to the first quarter of the fifth century remained fairly standard.

More recently, doubts have gradually increased. Three reasons may be adduced for this: 1) a growing sense that such an early date does not fit well with the archaeological data; 2) a gradual recognition that the Dotted Record may be of Sinhalese origin and hence not fully independent from the Southern tradition; 3) a fuller awareness of the existence of a considerable number of largely Sarvāstivādin sources which date the accession of Aśoka around one hundred years after the Mahāparinibbāna as opposed to the 218 years of the Pali sources. This was first perhaps expressed by Étienne Lamotte who in his highly influential history placed the previous consensus and the Sarvāstivādin sources on an almost equal footing, distinguishing between the long chronology (i.e. the corrected version of the Southern Buddhist tradition) which places the death of the Buddha in c. 486 B.C. and the short chronology i.e. the Sarvāstivādin which places the same event in c. 368 A.D. In fact, Lamotte does then adopt the long chronology: "comme hypothèse de travail,"[5] although he may have favoured a later dating in his last years.

The chronological systems in use in Buddhist countries

Space obviously would not permit a full review of the wide range of papers included in these volumes. Let us then simply note that the Tibeto-Mongolian

data is thoroughly reviewed in articles by Günter Grönbold, Claus Vogel, Per Kvaerne, Klaus Sagaster, Eckart Zabel, Champa Thupten Zongtse (in Tibetan) and a rather fully annotated paper by Seyfort Ruegg. Central Asian and Iranian data is looked at by Klaus Röhrborn, Werner Sundermann (two papers) and Klaus Schmidt. In addition to the papers already mentioned, Eastern Buddhist matters are covered by Herbert Franke, Lewis Lancaster and Bhikkhu Pāsādika (Vietnam).

There are also two papers concerned with the "Axial Age Theory" derived from the ideas of Karl Jaspers and a comparative paper concerned with parallel issues in early Greek history. Most of the above contributions represent a high standard of scholarship. I have more doubt in the case of some others. Let us simply note the over fifty pages devoted to the rather improbable, if erudite, speculations of P. H. L. Eggermont and the doubtful attempt of A. K. Narain to revive the old theory that there is a date in one of the inscriptions of Aśoka (MRE I).

The conclusions of these volumes on the date of the Buddha

A number of contributors attempt to assess the most likely date for the Buddha by the use of indirect evidence as to Indian cultural history. Bechert has placed thirteen contributions under this section heading and sums up the result as follows:

> ... the conclusion seems unavoidable that all major sources of indirect evidence point to later dates of the Buddha than those suggested by the corrected long chronology.
>
> (Symp. IV, 1, p. 11)

This seems to slightly overstate the case as not all the contributors propose any dating and others have worded their position very cautiously. It might be better to say that the overall tendency is to conclude that there is at minimum no objection to a later date. Undoubtedly the archaeological evidence as presented here by Herbert Härtel and in part by Hermann Kulke is the major factor tending to support a later date. It is not however clear whether it is as yet overwhelming. The other contributions which seem to support a late date are those by: Georg von Simson, Oskar von Hinüber, Siegfried Lienhard (around 400 B.C. with a margin of about twenty years), Wilhem Halbfass and, rather cautiously, Lambert Schmithausen.

Turning to the ten papers which Bechert classes as dealing directly with the evaluation of the Indian tradition, seven seem to present a viable case. At the extremes: Gen'ichi Yamazaki defends the long chronology, while none of the other contributions in this section envisage a date before 420 B.C. Akira Hirakawa defends the short chronology and Heinz Bechert himself sets a range from 400 B.C. to 350 B.C. but a "somewhat later date is not inconceivable."

(Symp. IV, 1, p. 236); no other contributor (except Eggermont) seems to propose a date after 380 B.C. Hajime Nakamura, K. R. Norman, and Richard Gombrich all propose dates within the range suggested by André Bareau: around 400 B.C. with a margin of twenty years on either side. Expressing this in other terms, the Buddha's period of teaching activity was in the second half of the fifth century B.C., perhaps extending into the first quarter of the fourth century.

It is worth noting that this is quite close to being a "median chronology" i.e. halfway between the short and the long chronology. Perhaps after all the difference between the short and the long chronology may in origin have simply amounted to whether 150 years was rounded down to a hundred or up to two hundred i.e. a difference in literary conventions.

The Rhys Davids-Gombrich thesis

In a paper read to the Royal Asiatic Society in 1874 and subsequently published in his *On the Ancient Coins and Measures of Ceylon*, T. W. Rhys Davids put forward an argument on rather different lines, as mentioned above. He interprets some of the information given in the oldest of the Ceylon chronicles in Pali, the *Dīpavaṃsa* in a way different both to the tradition of the chronicles and to the understanding of later scholarship. Partly because of the development of the consensus mentioned above and partly also because his interpretation of the *Dīpavaṃsa* was based upon manuscript materials and seemed to be superseded by the editions and translations of Wilhelm Geiger, the views of Rhys Davids were subsequently disregarded.

His position depends upon the interpretation of the list of five Vinaya authorities prior to Mahinda in the third century B.C. as giving data on their ages at death rather than on their number of years as a monk. The latter interpretation gives the traditional 218 years down to the accession of Aśoka i.e. the long chronology, but contains a number of problems. Indeed it has been generally recognized that a succession of five is too short for the long chronology. The alternative gives a shorter period of about 150 years.

Richard Gombrich has now developed a similar theory, based upon the same proposition but with a more detailed and somewhat modified argumentation. In his version the accession of Aśoka took place after 136 years. (I have elsewhere suggested some further minor changes.[6]) Gombrich's arguments have undoubtedly shown that the data in the *Dīpavaṃsa* on the lineage of the teachers is impressively consistent when interpreted in this way. He is certainly right to argue that the lineage is a succession of teachers expert in the Vinaya and not a succession of individuals with some institutional authority. No doubt too he is correct in pointing out that the existence of other lists of such teachers with different names, as found in various non-Pali sources, is in no way in contradiction. There would have been many such pedigrees for different pupil-teacher lines.

If the general arguments of the Rhys Davids-Gombrich thesis are correct, and they may well be, then the overall picture must be something like the following:

when the creators of the Sinhala chronicle tradition attempted to work out a chronology, they had basically two sources of information for the period prior to Aśoka. One was a lineage of teachers with ages at ordination and death. They must also have had some kind of brahmanical king-list, of the sort preserved for us in various *Purāṇas*, perhaps derived from diplomatic links with North India. (We know from Megasthenes that such lists were current in Mauryan governing circles.) The long chronology as we have it is the result of combining the two sources with adjustments to make them fit.

Plausibly, then, the oldest Sinhala tradition is that of the lineage of teachers. How old is that? It may of course go back to the arrival of Buddhism in Ceylon in the third century B.C. and have then been compiled on the basis of information handed down intact from the time of the Buddha. Unfortunately, there is no way of proving that at present. Since the last book of the *Vinaya-piṭaka* the *Parivāra* or "Appendix" already gives the list of the teachers together with a list of subsequent Vinaya authorities in Ceylon which terminates around the first century B.C., it must be relatively early and may well have been current by that date i.e. by the time at which the Pali Canon was set into writing.

Most probably then it represents the oldest attempt at a dating known to us. It seems quite possible that Ceylon which was a major trading area around this period may have been one of the main centres of South Asian Buddhism during some periods after the end of the Mauryan dynasty. Indeed prior to the Kuṣāṇas Anurādhapura and the Suṅga and Sātavāhana capital of Vidiśā (with which the Buddhism of Ceylon appears to have had some links) were quite possibly the two chief focal points of Buddhist activity for a while. If so, it is not at all surprising that the Sinhala texts should preserve earlier Buddhist traditions linked to the dynasties of North and Central India. Heinz Bechert, however, takes a rather different view.

Bechert's arguments

These two volumes contain around 66 pages of editorial material and substantial contributions from Bechert; so his views are quite well represented. A part of his argument is simply to make the point that the former general acceptance of the (revised) long chronology is a thing of the past. This is clearly the case.

In a different area, however, it seems to me that his position is more debatable. He writes:

> I am also convinced that the "short chronology" represents the earliest Buddhist chronology found in our sources. This does not, however, imply that it represents reliable chronological information.
>
> (Symp. IV, 1, 8)

On the face of it this seems much more doubtful. Lewis Lancaster in his contribution points out that short chronology sources appear in Chinese translation

from A.D. 306, while the long chronology appears first in a text translated between 265–317. (Symp. IV, 1, 455f.) Short chronology sources are more numerous, but since this simply reflects Sarvāstivādin influence it does not take us much further.

The primary reason for Bechert's belief does appear to be his acceptance of the claim that there is evidence for the presence of the short chronology in ancient Ceylon, specifically in the *Dīpavaṃsa*. I have elsewhere[7] argued that this is mistaken and must refer the reader there for the full arguments. In brief there are two passages which can be taken as supporting the short chronology (and many that do not.) The second of these (Dīp V 55–9) concerns the prophecy of the arising of Moggaliputta Tissa "in the future, in 118 years". Bechert, and several predecessors, take the prophecy as by the Buddha. However, he does not take. account of the parallel passages (Dhs-a 3–4; 6; Sp 35ff:) which make it clear that it is a prophecy given by the Elders of the Second Council. Indeed the fact that immediately after the prophecy the *Dīpavaṃsa* itself refers to the death of those elders (V 60) makes it sufficiently certain that it is recounting the same story. The problem is perhaps a result of the insertion of a section on the history of the eighteen schools at the beginning of chapter five (i.e. vv. 1–54) immediately before the prophecy. This has separated verse 55 from the description of the second council at the end of chapter four.

Bechert is clearly mistaken in this case, but his second example is little more plausible. In a prophecy of the Buddha concerning the Third Council and the advent of Mahinda we meet the same figure of 118 years immediately after a mention of the First Council (Dīp I 54–5). Most scholars have taken the view that there is a lacuna of some sort here and lines referring to the Second Council have dropped out.[8] This seems likely to be the case, since there is specific reference to the *third* council (*tatiyo saṃgaho*) – it does not seem very probable that anyone argued that the Third Council was only eighteen years after the Second which is traditionally dated to 100 B.C. or slightly later.

In any case, even if the text is taken as it stands, it would not prove Bechert's contention in the sense intended. He suggests that the passage in question will originate from a non-Mahāvihāra tradition (Symp. IV, 1, 344). However, the non-Mahāvihāra schools, notably that of the Abhayagiri monastery, were precisely those most influenced by North Indian traditions and the passage in question could then derive from Sarvāstivādin sources i.e. it would not be evidence of an independent Sinhala version of the short chronology.

In conclusion

It is clear that if the objective of these volumes was to find absolute proof as to the exact date of the Buddha, then they would have failed. No method or evidence we have at the present is sufficient to establish that to the strictest standards of evidence. What certainly has been done is to firmly dethrone the old consensus – it is not impossible that the long chronology may yet be rehabilitated, but

someone will have to undertake the task. From the point of view of reasonable probability the evidence seems to favour some kind of median chronology and we should no doubt speak of a date for the Buddha's Mahāparinibbāna of c. 400 B.C. – I choose the round number deliberately to indicate that the margins are rather loose.

It follows that the date of Mahāvīra and of kings such as Pasenadi or Bimbisāra must be correspondingly brought down, as they are part of the same historical context. Probably also the date of the Upaniṣads must be later and possible connexions with the Greek world must be rethought.

Notes

* A review article of *The Dating of the Historical Buddha, Die Datierung des Historischen Buddha*. Edited by Heinz Bechert, 2 Vols (of 3). (Symposium zur Buddhismusforschung, IV, 1–2) pp. xv + 525; x + 530. Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991–2. DM 310, 256.

1 *Blue Annals*, p. 22 (cited Symp. IV, 1, p. 399).

2 In the present volumes see: Symp(osium) IV, 1, pp. 344–57; 359–61; 398–9; 409–11; Symp. IV, 2, pp. 266–8 (nn. 15 and 17); 271 n. 42.

3 Bechert, H., "The date of the Buddha reconsidered", *IT* (1982), pp. 29–36; "A remark on the problem of the date of Mahāvīra", *IT* (1983), pp. 287–90; *Die Lebenszeit des Buddha – das älteste feststehende Datum der indischen Geschichte?* (Göttingen, 1986); "Remarks on the date of the Historical Buddha", *Buddhist Studies* (1988), pp. 97–117.

4 There were a few hold-outs, notably E. J. Thomas.

5 Lamotte, É., *Histoire du bouddhisme Indien, des origines à l'ère Saka*, Bibliothèque du Muséon, vol. 43 (Louvain, 1958), p. 15. The origin of the expression "working hypothesis" in this context is usually attributed to Max Müller. (He applied it to the date of Samudragupta). However, the *OED* attributes its first use in English to R. H. Hutton in 1871.

6 Cousins, L. S., "The 'Five Points' and the origins of the Buddhist schools", in *The Buddhist Forum*, ed. T. Skorupski, ii (London, 1991), p. 59f.

7 *Op. cit.*, pp. 55–7.

8 Most clearly expressed by Gombrich: Symp. IV, 2, p. 239 n. 12.

7

RECOVERING THE BUDDHA'S MESSAGE

R.F. Gombrich

Source: T. Skorupski (ed.) (1990) *The Buddhist Forum: Vol. 1.* London: School of Oriental and African Studies, pp. 5–30.

When Professor Schmithausen was so kind as to invite me to participate in his panel[1] on "the earliest Buddhism" and I accepted, I had to prepare a paper for discussion without being clear what my fellow-participants would assume that "earliest Buddhism" to be. In the nineteenth century, not all European scholars were even prepared to accept that such a historical person as Gotama the Buddha had ever existed; and though such an extremity of scepticism now seems absurd, many scholars since have been prepared to argue either that we no longer have the Buddha's authentic teachings or that we have only a very few, the rest of the purported teachings being garbled or distorted by the later tradition. Since I believe that in order to make sense to an audience one needs to begin from its assumptions – the crucial point in part two of my paper below – this uncertainty was a handicap. On reading the papers of my colleagues, I realized that, like me, they all (except Professor Aramaki?) assumed that the main body of soteriological teaching found in the Pāli Canon does go back to the Buddha himself. The main thrust of recent work by Professors Schmithausen, Vetter and Bronkhorst in this area, as I understand it, has been to argue that there are inconsistencies in the earliest textual material, and that from these inconsistencies we can deduce a chronological development in the teachings, but that this development may well have taken place within the Buddha's own lifetime and preaching career. On the other hand, the fact that the fundamental Buddhist teachings can be ascribed to the Buddha himself was more assumed than argued for by my colleagues, whereas I made some attempt to reconstruct how the scriptural texts came into being. It seems to me that if my reconstruction is anything like correct, it raises problems for the method of arguing from alleged inconsistencies and makes it unlikely that we can in fact ever discover what the Buddha preached first and what later. Accordingly, when I spoke on the panel I made little use of my prepared script and preferred to use my time to address the latter issues. It is obvious that the positions taken by some of us are

incompatible; one can either politely ignore the fact (and leave the audience to make up its own mind) or try to address the issues and hope to progress by argument. Though the latter course is unusual in such intellectual backwaters as Indology and Buddhist studies, I ventured to take it at the conference. By the same token, I have for publication revised the first part of my paper along the lines on which I spoke while omitting criticisms of specific points. The second part of the paper is very little altered from the conference version.

I. We agree, then, that "the earliest Buddhism" is that of the Buddha himself. Unless a certain individual had propounded a doctrine that many found intellectually compelling and emotionally satisfying, and unless he had deliberately organized his following, there would now be no *Dhamma* and no *Saṅgha*. There could have been a *Dhamma* without a *Saṅgha*, but in that case Buddhism would have had no history.

The function of the *Saṅgha* as an institution was twofold: to provide an institutional framework in which men and women could devote themselves to the quest for salvation (*nirvāṇa*), and to preserve the Buddha's teaching. In an age without books, the latter function can have been no minor matter. World history can, I believe, offer hardly any parallels to the creation and preservation of so large a body of texts as the Buddhist Canon. I have argued elsewhere[2] that Buddhists may have realized that it was possible because of the example before them of the brahmin preservation of Vedic literature, achieved by dint of a system of extraordinarily long and tedious compulsory education for brahmin boys.

None of the other religious leaders contemporary with the Buddha seem to have achieved such preservation of their teachings, and this may well reflect the fact that they did not organize settled religious communities like the Buddhist monasteries. I believe the Digambara Jaina tradition that their own canon was wholly lost, for I cannot see why such a story should arise if it were not true, whereas the temptation to claim the highest antiquity and authority for one's scriptures is obvious. In any case, all Jains agree that many of their canonical texts were lost at an early stage. The Buddhists were aware of the contrast between themselves and the Jains. The *Saṅgīti-suttanta*[3] begins by recounting that at the death of Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta his followers disagreed about what he had said. The same passage occurs at two other points in the Pāli Canon; but it makes good sense in this context, for it is the occasion for rehearsing a long summary of the Buddha's teaching in the form of mnemonic lists. The text says that the rehearsal was led by Sāriputta, in the Buddha's lifetime. Whether the text records a historical incident we shall probably never know. But that is not my point. I would argue that unless we posit that such episodes took place not merely after the Buddha's death but as soon as the *Saṅgha* had reached a size and geographic spread which precluded frequent meetings with the Buddha, it is not possible to conceive how the teachings were preserved or texts were composed. By similar reasoning, something like the first *saṅgāyanā* (communal recitation) must have taken place, otherwise there would simply be no corpus of

scriptures. Details such as the precise time and place of the event are irrelevant to this consideration.

The Buddhists had to emulate the brahmins by preserving a large body of texts, but since membership of the Saṅgha was not ascribed at birth but achieved much later, usually in adulthood, they could not imitate the years of compulsory education. To preserve orally the basic Buddhist texts, by which I mean something like the *Vinaya* minus the *Parivāra*, the four *Nikāyas* of prose sermons and the poetry of the *Khuddaka-nikāya* – must have required a vast amount of sustained and highly organized effort. Though there is evidence that extraordinary feats of memory are possible for individuals, whether or not they live in preliterate civilizations,[4] these Buddhist texts amount to hundreds of thousands of lines, so much that only a very few individuals of exceptional mnemonic gifts can ever have mastered the lot. We know that in Ceylon monks (and presumably nuns) specialized in a specific collection of texts, and the logic of the situation suggests that this must have been so from the outset.

This must have implications for textual criticism. Segments of texts (sometimes called pericopes) are preserved in different contexts, but it may not be possible to deduce from this that one passage is earlier than another, let alone which comes first. For instance, most of the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* occurs elsewhere in the Pāli Canon, but that only shows that what the memorizers of the *Dīgha-nikāya* kept as a single text was preserved piecemeal by other groups. This is by no means to deny that one can occasionally show that a piece of text must have started in one context from which it was then transferred to another; but each such piece of evidence has to be teased out separately, and such demonstrations are still very few.[5]

No one was in a position to record or reproduce the Buddha's sermons as he uttered them. The texts preserved did not just drop from his lips; they must be products of deliberate composition – in fact, they were composed to be memorized. This inevitably introduces a certain formalization: such features as versification, numbered lists, repetition and stock formulae are all aids to memory. Vedic literature includes texts which display all these features. Early brahminical literature also includes prose texts, the *sūtras*, which were orally preserved and followed a different strategy: instead of redundancy, they aim for extreme brevity. There are however no early Buddhist texts in the *sūtra* style. A *sūtra* is so composed that it cannot be understood without exegesis. The Buddhist texts, by contrast, apparently aim to be self-explanatory.

Since there were religious texts being preserved in the Buddha's environment in both prose and verse, there seems to be no *a priori* ground for holding that Buddhist prose must be older than Buddhist verse or vice versa.[6] The ability to speak in verse *extempore* is not common and there is no reason to suppose that the Buddha had it; moreover, extended discourse in *extempore* verse in ancient India was generally in a rather free metre like the *anuṣṭubh*, not in the kind of lyric metres found in the *Suttanipāta*. A text which purports to reproduce an actual sermon by the Buddha is therefore likely to be in prose, and this implies

no particular lapse of time after the event. As we know, many texts do purport to reproduce the Buddha's sermons. If in doing so they employ various of the conventions of oral literature, schematizing the material by the use of formulae and stock passages, this is no argument against their essential authenticity.

I turn now to consider the style of argument that attempts to discern chronological layers in the texts by finding inconsistencies in them. Before criticizing this approach, I must make it clear that I am in no way committed to assuming *a priori* that the early texts do all date from the Buddha's lifetime or to denying that stratification is possible. My wish is merely to expose what I see as faulty argumentation. I also think it sound method to accept tradition until we are shown sufficient reason to reject it.

The method of analysing Buddhist arguments with a view to establishing their coherence and development is I think largely inherited from the late Professor Frauwallner. I have the greatest admiration for his work and think that it has yielded many valid and interesting results. However, we must remember that most of that work was applied to philosophical texts which were undoubtedly written and read. I must begin my criticism by reiterating in the strongest terms that the kind of analysis which can dissect a *written* philosophical tradition is inappropriate for oral materials. As I have shown, the texts preserving "the Buddha's word" are not authored in the same sense as a written text. While it is perfectly possible that some of the texts (perhaps some poetry?) were composed by the Buddha himself, we cannot know this with any certainty, and almost all the texts are, strictly speaking, anonymous compositions. The one important exception to this may be the *Thera-* and *Therī-gāthās*, which may be by the individual monks and nuns whom tradition holds to have been the authors.

There is however a principle that we may learn from the critical study of written texts, for its validity does not depend on the medium. This is the principle known as *difficilior potior*, that it is the more difficult reading which is to be preferred. Colleagues have written on the assumption that the Buddha, since he was a great thinker, must have been consistent, so that inconsistencies must have been introduced later by the less intelligent men who followed him. But that is the reverse of how we should normally look at it. A tradition, whether scribal or oral, always tends to *iron out* inconsistencies; when in any doubt, it goes for the obvious. It is this tendency to which *difficilior potior* refers. If our texts preserve something awkward, it is most unlikely to have been introduced by later generations of Buddhists who had been taught to accept the generally neat and uniform doctrine expounded in the commentaries.

The Buddha preached for many years – tradition says, for forty five. Teachers, unless they are exceptionally stupid, change both their opinions and their way of putting things. That the Buddha varied his way of putting things according to what audience he was addressing is indeed a commonplace of the Buddhist tradition, which attributes to him supreme "skill in means"; but that tradition would baulk at the idea that he ever changed his mind. However, I am not committed to the tradition; nor do the two kinds of change, in meaning and

expression, necessarily show results which the observer can distinguish. It is mainly writing that freezes our past insights for us and so gives our *oeuvre* a certain consistency; even so, I suspect that there can be few university teachers today who have not had the experience of re-reading something they had written long ago and finding it unfamiliar. (Which is more depressing: to find that what we once wrote now seems all wrong, or to find that it contains facts we have forgotten and bright ideas we can no longer remember having thought of?) Thus, as hard-headed historians we cannot think that over 45 years the Buddha could have been entirely consistent – and especially when we take into account that he could not read over or play back what he had said. If the texts have any valid claim to be the record of so long a preaching career, they cannot be wholly consistent. Indeed, the boot is on the other foot: the texts are too consistent to be a wholly credible record. It is obvious that literary convention and human forgetfulness have contributed to the tendency recalled in my previous paragraph so as to iron out many of the inconsistencies of both message and expression which must have occurred.

To avoid any possible misunderstanding, let me add that naturally I am not suggesting that the Buddha's teaching was incoherent. Had that been so, there would have been few converts and no enduring tradition. There is considerable agreement in the canonical texts themselves and the commentaries on those texts about the central features of the Buddha's message; and Mr Norman seems to me to give an excellent account of them in his paper for this volume.[7]

Despite this, some of my learned colleagues have called the texts as witnesses into the dock, and declared after cross-examination that their testimony leaves much to be desired. Do the texts claim that there are Four Noble Truths? But our logic tells us that the third is a corollary of the second, so there should only be Three. Worse, it is alleged that the very accounts of the Buddha's enlightenment are inconsistent. For example, he or his followers could apparently not make up their minds whether the crucial step is to get rid of all moral defilements or to know that one has done so. Many similar failings are alleged, each scholar selecting his own and accordingly devising a different line of development for early Buddhism.

But what are we discussing here? The description of religious experience is notoriously difficult. There is good reason for this difficulty. Since language is an instrument of social communication, all private experiences tend to elude linguistic expression, as we know from our visits to the doctor. For linguistic communication, we depend on shared experience: the doctor will with luck be able to deduce from our account of where and how it hurts what is wrong with us, because of similar previous attempts at description which he has read or encountered in his practice. But if our pain is unique in his experience, we are unlikely to be able to make him understand. To describe our emotions or aesthetic feelings we resort to the conventions offered by our culture but generally feel dissatisfied by their inadequacy: common words cannot convey our singularity.

Following an overwhelming experience, the Buddha tried to describe it, in

order to recommend it to others. He felt that it was new, at least in his time, so that he had no past descriptions to help him out; indeed, tradition records that he was reluctant to preach because he doubted whether anyone would accept his account.[8] Surely one would expect a highly intelligent and articulate person not to be content with one kind of description of his experience but to approach it from many angles and points of view. In particular, since his experience was felt to be an awareness, he would be bound to speak of it both in subjective, experiential terms, and in more objective terms to convey the truth realized. (In general Sanskrit terminology, I am referring to *yoga*, the experience, and *jñāna*, the knowledge.) Followers, no doubt including some who had not had such an experience, standardized and classified the accounts of it. But they did preserve two kinds of account, experiential and gnostic, and since the Buddha evidently had a *gnostic experience* I find it odd to argue that one kind of account must be earlier or more authentic than the other.

The dual nature of gnostic experience is less intractable than the sheer impossibility of describing the kinds of states of mind nowadays generally called "altered states of consciousness". The typical reaction to having such an experience has been to say that it is beyond words and to describe it, if at all, in highly figurative language. Nevertheless, in societies in which altered states of consciousness are regularly sought and/or attained, standardized descriptions of the experience are naturally current, and people develop expectations that certain practices will lead to specific experiences. Fieldwork in Sri Lanka has convinced me that even in such a society the labelling of altered states of consciousness performs a social function but may completely falsify the experiences. Sinhala Buddhist culture defines possession, loss of normal awareness and self-control, as the polar opposite of the states achieved by the Buddhist mediator; and yet I have recorded[9] several cases in which it seems clear from circumstantial evidence that a person is experiencing a state of consciousness which is defined in completely different terms (for instance, as possession or *jhāna*) according to the institutional context and hence the cultural expectations. If the same state can be given contrasting labels, it is plausible that the same label may also be applied to very different states.

I am not claiming that the Buddha was so muddled that he could not distinguish between losing and enhancing normal awareness. But I am claiming that descriptions of meditative or spiritual experiences cannot profitably be submitted to the same kind of scrutiny as philosophical texts.

I would, however, go even further. Coherence in these matters is largely in the eye of the beholder. Few texts – taking that term in the widest sense – are up to the standards of the western lawyer or academic in their logical coherence or clarity of denotation, and by those standards most of the world's literary and religious classics are to be found wanting. The first verse of St. John's gospel informs us (in the King James version) that "the Word was with God, and the Word was God". Does this stand up to our examination? Must St. John go to the back of the class?

Surely what we do with such a passage is not to decide that it is incoherent but try to learn what coherence the Christian tradition has found in it. Yet some of my colleagues are finding inconsistencies in the canonical texts which they assert to be such without telling us how the Buddhist tradition itself regards the texts as consistent – as if that were not important. My own view is not, I repeat, that we have to accept the Buddhist tradition uncritically, but that if it interprets texts as coherent, that interpretation deserves the most serious consideration.

The above critical remarks do not mean that I think we can do no more than rehearse the Buddhist tradition. We have historical knowledge and awareness denied to the commentators, and can use them to throw light on the earliest texts. In the second half of my paper I hope to make a positive contribution by illustrating this point.

II. Meaning is embedded in a cultural context and any message, however new, must be couched in terms the audience can understand. The speaker cannot communicate with his audience unless he shares not merely their language, in the literal sense, but most of the presuppositions reflected in their use of that language – though of course he need accept the presuppositions only provisionally. The new acquires its meaning by standing in contrast to the old; fully to understand a speaker, we need to know what he is denying. We shall never know all the assumptions in the minds of the audiences to whom the Buddha preached, but we can know a good deal, and I find that not enough use has yet been made of that knowledge.

The Buddha's message is to be understood in opposition to the other articulated ideologies of his day. The most important of these was the brahminical. Jains maintain that Mahāvīra, the Buddha's contemporary, was no great innovator but carrying on an older tradition. That may be so, but of that older tradition we have no certain knowledge. Neither the other contemporary teachers mentioned in the Pāli texts nor, I believe, Mahāvīra, left any surviving record of their teachings, so we depend on what the Buddhist texts have to say about them. Even this, however, is quite helpful: the Buddha's view of moral causation was clearly meant to contrast with that of the other views described in the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*[10] (whether those descriptions are historically accurate or not); and in the *Vinaya* the Buddha several times[11] defined what he meant by his middle way in contrast to the extreme asceticism of other sects. But clearly it is more illuminating to have independent evidence and then be able to see what the Buddha made of it.

Before trying to apply this principle, I must offer an observation which is certainly subjective and yet seems to me important. Again and again we find that the Buddha's references to brahmins and brahminism are humorous and satirical. Are jokes ever composed by committees? The guru is venerated in India. His words are treasured. That is not to say that later words which seem worth treasuring may not be attributed to the guru – certainly they may. But does one attribute to the guru a wide range of humorous observations, even remarks which border on flippancy? When the Buddha is recorded to have said[12] that

brahmins claim to be born from the mouth of Brahmā, but don't their mothers menstruate and give birth? – then I wonder whether any monk would have dared to attribute such a remark to him unless he had actually said it.

* * *

According to the Canon, many of the Buddha's sermons were addressed to brahmins. Moreover, of those monks whose caste origins were recorded by the tradition (mainly the commentary to the *Theragāthā*), about 40% were brahmins.[13] The original Saṅgha did not contain a typical cross-section of the population. What religious institution does? In the early Saṅgha the high-caste, the wealthy and the educated – three overlapping groups then as still (in India) – were heavily over-represented. It is hardly surprising that the Buddha should have tended to speak to the educated class. They were the professional educators – as to a large extent they have been ever since.

The word *veda* has been used to refer to certain texts, but its original meaning is simply "knowledge". Another term for the *Veda*, those texts which constituted *the* knowledge which really counted, is *brahman*. A "*brahman* person" is a *brāhmaṇa*. The *Veda* had appeared among men through the mouths of such people, and in the Buddha's day (and long after) access to it still only lay in the same quarter. The *Veda*, embodying true knowledge, was the source of all authority; but what the *Veda* said – and indeed what it meant – one could learn only from brahmins. To deny the authority of the *Veda*, therefore, was to deny the authority of brahmins, and vice versa. This is precisely what the Buddha did.

The fact that the Buddha gave new values to terms like *brāhmaṇa* is of course very well known. For him the true brahmin is the man who displays not the traditional, largely ascribed characteristics of the brahmin, such as pure birth, but the achieved qualities of the good Buddhist, ethical and psychological traits.[14] The brahmin by caste alone, the teacher of the *Veda*, is (jokingly) etymologized as the "non-meditator" (*ajjhāyaka*).[15] Brahmins who have memorized the three *Vedas* (*tevijja*) really know nothing:[16] it is the process of achieving Enlightenment – what the Buddha is said to have achieved in the three watches of that night – which constitutes the true "three knowledges".[17]

Some of the great modern scholars of Buddhism have said that the Buddha had no direct knowledge of Vedic texts,[18] but that is certainly wrong. The joke about how brahmins are born satirizes the *Puruṣasūkta*, the text in which brahmins are said to originate from the mouth of the cosmic Man.[19] There are similarly satirical allusions to the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. One example is the anecdote about Brahmā's delusion that he created other beings. It occurs in the *Brahmajāla-sutta*[20] of the *Dīgha-nikāya* to explain why some people think that the world and the soul are partly eternal and partly not; but, as Rhys Davids points out in the footnote to his translation,[21] it also occurs in the *Majjhima-* and *Saṃyutta-nikāyas* and in the *Jātaka* – just what one would expect if my view of the preservation of the *Buddhavacana* is anywhere near the truth. Brahmā is reborn (in Rhys Davids' words)

"either because his span of years has passed or his merit is exhausted"; he then gets lonely and upset and longs for company. Then, "either because their span of years had passed or their merit was exhausted", other beings are reborn alongside him. *Post hoc, propter hoc*, thinks silly old Brahmā, and gets the idea that the other beings are his creation. I suppose that many who have read and even taught this passage (since it is in Warder's *Introduction to Pali*)[22] have noticed that this is just a satirical retelling of the creation myth in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*,[23] in which Brahmā is lonely and afraid and so begets for company; but I am not aware that anyone has pointed it out in print.

However, it was not just to joke on peripheral topics that the Buddha referred to brahmin doctrines, notably as expressed in the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*. For many years I have tried to show in my teaching and lecturing that the Buddha presented central parts of his message, concerning *kamma* and the *tilakkhaṇa*,[24] as a set of antitheses to brahminical doctrine.[25] I shall need much more time to read and think about the texts before I can hope to expound this interpretation at full length, but in this paper I can at least indicate with a couple of illustrations the general argument.

I am by no means the first to have pointed out the importance of the *Alagaddūpama-sutta*.[26] It was Mr. Norman, my teacher and fellow-contributor to the panel, who first demonstrated[27] that it contains a deliberate refutation of Yājñavalkya's teaching in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. Since experience has shown me that this demonstration is still not widely known, I shall take the liberty of summarizing the argument in my own words.

The *sutta* has two relevant passages, which I translate[28] as follows:

> A. "There are six wrong views: An unwise, untrained person may think of the body, 'This is mine, this is me, this is my self'; he may think that of feelings; of perceptions; of volitions; or of what has been seen, heard, thought, cognized, reached, sought or considered by the mind. The sixth is to identify the world and self, to believe: 'At death I shall become permanent, eternal, unchanging, and so remain forever the same; and that is mine, that is me, that is my self.' A wise and well-trained person sees that all these positions are wrong, and so he is not worried about something that does not exist."[29]
>
> B. "So give up what is not yours, and you will find that that makes you happy. What is not yours? The body, feelings, perceptions, volitions and consciousness. What do you think of this, monks? If someone were to gather the grass, sticks, branches and foliage here in Jeta's wood or burn it or use it in some other way, would you think he was gathering, burning or using you? 'No, sir.' And why not? Because it is not your self and has nothing to do with your self."[30]

Mr. Norman has shown that passage B, in the light of passage A, must be understood as a satirical allusion to the identification of the world and the self –

the identification which constitutes the most famous doctrine propounded in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya Upaniṣads*. That identification was the culmination of a theory of the equivalence between macrocosm and microcosm; the need for multiple, partial equivalences was short-circuited by identifying the soul/essence of the invidual and of the world. The Buddha in a sense kept the equivalence, or at least parallelism, for he argued against a single essence at either level and so made macrocosm and microcosm equally devoid of soul/essence.

There seem to be verbal echoes of Yājñavalkya. The sixth wrong view in passage A is that after death I shall be *nicco, dhuvo* etc. Compare *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4,4,23: *eṣa nityo mahimā brāhmaṇasya* (the *brāhmaṇa* here being one who has realized his identity with *brahman*); 4,4,20: *aja ātmā mahān dhruvaḥ*. The third point of the *tilakkhaṇas, dukkha*, is not mentioned here, but is of course opposed to *ānanda*, as at *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3,9,28: *vijñānam ānandaṃ brahma* and 4,3,33: *athaiṣa eva parama ānandaḥ, eṣa brahmalokaḥ*. It remains only to remind readers of the most important and closest parallel of all. The fifth wrong view is to identify with what has been *diṭṭhaṃ sutaṃ mataṃ viññātaṃ*. What exactly is that? The answer is at *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 4,5,6: *ātmani khalv are dṛṣṭe śrute mate vijñāte idaṃ sarvaṃ viditam*. So here is the form of the microcosm-macrocosm equivalence to which the Buddha is alluding; and we can further see that his fifth wrong view is Yājñavalkya's realization of that identity in life, and his sixth the making real that identity at death. But, says the Buddha, this is something that does not exist (*asat*).

Note that none of these parallels is recorded by the commentary. How could one argue that these statements were not made by the Buddha but produced by the later monastic tradition when that tradition, which certainly did produce the commentaries, appears not fully to understand them?

The Buddha did not reject everything that Yājñavalkya said. At *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 4,4,5, he says that by *puṇya karman* a person at death becomes *puṇya*, by *pāpa karman, pāpa*. Though the meaning of *puṇya karman* in brahminical literature had hitherto been "purifying ritual", the context here suggests a more general meaning. The passage is terse, so the meaning of *karman* is not spelt out; but it would be reasonable to suppose that what is meant is "act", ritual and ethical action are not being fully differentiated. The Buddha went much further in his revalorization of the term: "By act", he said, "I mean intention".[31] Familiarity has dulled our perception of how bold a use of language that is. Action is completely internalized – in fact, transformed into its opposite. This goes just as far as saying that someone whom the world thinks a brahmin could really be an outcaste, and vice versa.

The change in the meaning of "action" lies at the heart of Buddhism and is fundamental to the coherence of the system. The Buddha revalorized not only brahminical soteriology, but ritual too. I conclude by offering an important instance of such revalorization.[32]

According to the Buddha, our six senses (including the mind) and their objects are ablaze with the three fires of passion, hate and delusion, and the goal is to extinguish those fires. According to Buddhist tradition, the doctrine of the three fires was first enunciated in the Buddha's third sermon, the *Ādittapariyāya Sutta*. The *Vinaya* (1,23–35) presents this sermon as the culmination of a long story: the Buddha converts three brahmin ascetics (Uruvela Kassapa, Nadī Kassapa and Gayā Kassapa) by miracles he performs while staying in the building in which they keep their ritual fires; he persuades them to give up the *agnihotra* (Pāli *aggihutta*). Thus, just as the Enlightenment is represented by the allegory of the battle against Māra, the message of what T.S.Eliot[33] has made famous in our culture as "The Fire Sermon" is conveyed allegorically by the story of the three Kassapas. The link is made plain by the sermon's use of the fire metaphor.

The fires the Buddha sees burning are three because that number corresponds to the three permanently burning fires of the *āhitāgni*.[34] There could after all have been some other number; were the reference less specific, the same message could have been conveyed by talking of one, generalized fire, or maybe two, e.g. *taṇhā* and *avijjā*. To reach three, *taṇhā* has to be split into *rāga* and *dosa*, positive and negative.

My claim seems to be corroborated by an interesting sermon in which the Buddha gives an allegorical interpretation of the three fires which is somewhat like the (much later) one in *Manu*,[35] but depends on puns. I know of no modern discussion of this sermon, *Aṅguttara Nikāya, Sattaka Nipāta, Mahāyañña Vagga, sutta XLIV*.[36] Since I find E.M. Hare's translation unsatisfactory, I offer my own, with some comments.[37]

> "Once the Blessed One was staying at Jetavana in Anāthapiṇḍika's park in Sāvatthī. At that time the brahmin (a) Uggatasarīra (b) (Extended-Body, i.e., Fatty) had prepared a great sacrifice. Five hundred bulls and as many steers, heifers, goats and rams had been brought up to the sacrificial post for sacrifice. Then the brahmin went up to the Blessed One and greeted him, and after an exchange of courtesies he sat to one side. Then Uggatasarīra said to the Blessed One, 'Gotama, I have heard that it is very rewarding and advantageous to kindle (c) a fire and set up a sacrificial post'. The Blessed One agreed that he had heard the same; this conversation was twice repeated. 'Well then, Gotama, your ideas and ours, what you have heard and we have heard, agree perfectly' (d).
>
> At this the Venerable Ānanda said, 'Brahmin, you should not question the Tathāgata (e) by saying what you did, but by telling him that you want to kindle a fire and set up a sacrificial post, and asking him to advise and instruct you so that it may be for your long-term benefit and welfare.' Then the brahmin asked the Blessed One so to advise him.
>
> Brahmin, when one kindles a fire and sets up a sacrificial post, even

before the sacrifice takes place one is setting up three knives which are morally wrong (f) and lead to painful results. The three are the knives of body, speech and mind. Even before the sacrifice, one thinks, 'Let this many animals be slaughtered for sacrifice.' So while thinking one is doing something purifying (g) one is doing something not purifying; while thinking one is doing right one is doing wrong; while thinking one is finding the way to a good rebirth one is finding the way to a bad. So the knife of mind comes first. Then one says, 'Let this many animals be slaughtered for sacrifice', and so under the same misapprehensions one is setting up the knife of speech next. Then one oneself initiates (h) the slaughter, and so sets up the third knife of body.

Brahmin, these are the three fires one should abandon, avoid, not serve: the fires of passion, hate and delusion. Why? Because a passionate person who is overcome and mentally controlled by passion does wrong in body, word and thought. So at the dissolution of the body, after death, he goes to a bad rebirth, to hell. The same goes for a hating and for a deluded person. So one should abandon these three fires.

Brahmin, these are the three fires one should honour, respect, worship and look after properly and well (i): the fire fit for oblations, the fire of the householder and the fire worthy of religious offerings (j).

Whoever the parents are (k), they, brahmin, are what is called the fire fit for oblations. Why? From that source, brahmin, was this person oblated, did he come into existence. So he should honour it and look after it. Whoever your children, wives, slaves, servants or workers are, they are what is called the householder's fire. So that fire too should be honoured and looked after. The ascetics and brahmins who keep from intoxication and negligence, who keep to patience and restraint, who control, pacify and cool themselves (l), they are the fire worthy of religious offerings. So that fire too should be honoured and tended.

But, brahmin, this fire of wood should from time to time be kindled, from time to time be cared for, from time to time be put out (m), from time to time be stored (n).

At these words Uggatasarīra said to the Blessed One, 'Excellent, Gotama! From today forth please accept me as your lifelong disciple; I put my faith in you. Herewith I release all the animals and grant them life. Let them eat green grass and drink cool water, and let cool breezes blow upon them.'"

Notes on the above translation

a. *Contra* Hare, I construe as a genitive of agent with a past passive participle.

b. I assume a joke. The commentary (C) says he was so known because of both his physique (*attabhāva*) and his wealth.

c. *ādhānaṃ* (Hardy) must be the correct reading, not *ādānaṃ* (C).

d. C: *sabbena sabban ti sabbena sutena sabbaṃ sutaṃ. sameti saṃsandati.* The word *suta* recalls *śruti*, "sacred text".

e. Tathāgatā plural of respect?

f. "morally wrong" translates *akusala*; "right" and "wrong" below *kusala* and *akusala*.

g. "purifying" translates *puñña*; this is one of the fundamental puns or reinterpretations of Buddhism: for the Buddhist the term is virtually a synonym of *kusala*.

h. C reads *samārambhati* with v.l *samārabhati* Hardy *samārabbhati*. Possibly connected with *ālabh* "to kill".

i. Hare's translation is grammatically impossible: "These three fires, when esteemed, revered, venerated, respected, must bring best happiness." *Parihātabbā* must be passive; as C says, it = *pariharitabbā*. For the phonetic change cf. *kātabba* < Sanskrit *kartavya*. *Parihātabbā* answers *pahātabbā* in the previous paragraph. The real difficulty lies in *sukhaṃ*, which is not normally a synonym of *sammā*. I suspect a corruption and venture the suggestion that what was intended was another pun, on *sukkhaṃ*, "dry", which is what fires should be kept. Not all the Buddha's puns are phonetically perfect; one must bear in mind that these started as oral texts, so that small differences could be blurred, quite apart from the fact that in the Buddha's original dialect they may have been obliterated anyway. I know no parallel for *sukhaṃ / sukkhaṃ*, but occasional *dukha* for *dukkha* is guaranteed by metre.

j. The punning names of the three fires are of course untranslatable. The first, *āhuneyya*, is however a precise Pāli equivalent to *āhavanīya*, so the reference is changed but not the meaning. The second, *gahapataggi*, has turned "the fire of householdership" into "the fire of the householder"; losing the final *i* of *gahapati* by *sandhi* increases the phonetic similarity. The third name shows a greater gap between Sanskrit *dakṣiṇa* "south" and Pāli *dakkhiṇeyya*; but the latter implies a punning interpretation of *dakṣiṇāgni* as "the fire of sacrificial fees (*dakṣiṇā*)".

k. Hare's "the man who honoureth his father and his mother" is impossible; it is they, not their son, who must be worthy of honour. *Yassa* is difficult; the text of this passage shows several variants. The parallel point in the text about the third fire has *ye te*, with no variants. I would restore *ye*, or better still *ye 'ssa*,[38] at this point for the first two fires at lines 3 and 9, interpreting both *ye* and *te* as nominative plural, and posit that the corruption occurred because *te* was interpreted as *tava*, which would make good sense, and the relative changed to agree with it. For the third fire, *te* = *tava* would make little sense, so there was no corruption.

l. *parinibbāpenti*. In an article elsewhere[39] I have shown that this whole phrase is hard to translate appropriately because it has been clumsily lifted from quite a different context.

m. *nibbāpetabbo.*
n. C: *nikkhipitabbo ti yathā na vinassati evaṃ ṭhapetabbo*: "it is to be so placed that it does not go out". The flame could be transferred to some sheltered place or vessel.

It may not be fanciful to see in the Buddha's first allegorical fire an allusion to the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*; the idea that one is oblated from one's parents is the same, and there may even be a verbal echo. Our text says one is *āhuto saṃbhūto*. Compare *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 6,2,13: "Gautama, woman is fire. Her lap is the firewood, her body-hair the smoke, her womb is flame, what he does inside is the embers, enjoyments are the sparks. In this very fire the gods offer semen; from that oblation (*āhuteḥ*) man comes into existence (*saṃbhavati*)."

Dr Chris Minkowski has kindly pointed out[40] that the last sentence of the *sutta* echoes a verse of the *Ṛgveda X*, 169, 1, which blesses cows, invoking for them pleasant breezes, good grass and refreshing water. The words are different but the sentiments the same. The verse, which begins with the word *mayobhūr*, is prescribed for use in several *śrauta* and *gṛhya* rites.[41] He writes: "It appears to be an all-purpose benedictory verse for cows used both in daily routine and in ritual celebration. I think it is therefore quite possible that specifically this verse is echoed in the Buddhist text. As the Fatty Brahmin let the cows go he recited the verse he would recite in letting them out to graze."

* * *

Let me sum up. I have argued that we (unlike the commentators) can see the Buddha's message in systematic opposition to beliefs and practices of his day, especially those of the educated class who inevitably constituted most of his audience and following. Texts, which by and large do not represent his precise words (or if they do, we can never know it), must have been composed during his lifetime. Unfortunately I have not made a close study of the *Aṭṭhaka* and *Pārāyaṇa Vagga*, but I would certainly see no *a priori* problem in allowing them to date from the Buddha's lifetime, because I believe that a lot of the texts must do so. To go further, and try to sort out which of the texts contemporary with the Buddha date from his early years I would think a hopeless enterprise.

Many years ago my aunt, a violinist, was employed to play in the orchestra attached to the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford-on-Avon. She lodged with a working class family. She was astonished to discover one day that they did not believe that a man called Shakespeare had ever existed. "So who do you think wrote the plays?" she asked. "The Festival Committee, of course", came the pitying reply. I am content to be a loyạl nephew. On the other hand we must remember that if the plays had never been published the role of the Committee might indeed be crucial.

Notes

1 At the 7th World Sanskrit Conference, held in Leiden, August 1987. The editor of the present publication wishes to express his gratitude to E.J. Brill for permission to reproduce here Professor Gombrich's paper, originally submitted for publication in a volume edited by Professor Lambert Schmithausen and entitled *Studies in Earliest Buddhism and Madhyamaka* (forthcoming).

2 "How the Mahāyāna began", *Journal of Pāli and Buddhist Studies* I, Nagoya, March 1988, 29–46. This article is included in the present publication as part of Professor Gombrich's seminar presentation.

3 *Dīgha-nikāya, sutta* XXXIII.

4 See Ulric Neisser, ed., *Memory Observed: Remembering in Natural Contexts*, San Francisco, 1982, especially parts V and VII. On the topic "Literacy and Memory" Neisser writes, page 241: "Illiteracy cannot improve memory any more than my lack of wings improves my speed afoot. And while it would be logically possible to argue that literacy and schooling make memory worse, the fact of the matter is that they don't. On the contrary: cross-cultural studies have generally found a positive relation between schooling and memory." On the other hand, he goes on, "particular abilities can be nourished by particular cultural institutions". Bards performing oral poetry are one such institution; the Saṅgha memorizing Buddhist texts could well be another.

5 Some notable efforts in this direction were made by Jean Przyluski in his huge four-part article "Le Parinirvāṇa et les funerailles du Buddha". Many of his arguments now seem far-fetched and some of his statements have even been shown to be factually inaccurate; but I remain impressed by his analysis of the third chapter (*bhāṇavāra*) of the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* in the second part of the article, *JA*, XIème série, XII, 1918, 401–56. For a case study on a far more modest scale, see my "Three souls, one or none: the vagaries of a Pāli pericope", *JPTS*, XI, 1987, 73–8.

6 Similarly, while versifiers differ in their ability, I can see no *a priori* ground for supposing that a poem which is metrically strict must be older or younger than one which employs metrical licence. Naturally this is not to deny that some metres were invented earlier than others.

7 Professor Gombrich is referring here to Mr Norman's paper included in the volume edited by Professor Schmithausen.

8 *Vinaya*, I, 5.

9 R. Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed*, Princeton, 1988.

10 *Dīgha-nikāya*, I, 52–59.

11 e.g., *Vinaya*, I, 305; III, 212.

12 *Majjhima-nikāya*, II, 148 = *Dīgha-nikāya*, III, 81–82.

13 B.G. Gokhale, "Early Buddhism and the Brahmins", in A.K. Narain, ed., *Studies in the History of Buddhism*, Delhi, 68–80.

14 *Suttanipāta*, verse 142 (= *Vasala-sutta*, verse 27).

15 *Dīgha-nikāya*, III, 94.

16 *Tevijja-sutta, Dīgha-nikāya, sutta* XIII.

17 *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, I, 163.

18 e.g., L. de la Vallée Poussin, *La morale bouddhique*, Paris, 1927, 12.

19 *Rgveda*, X, 90, 12.

20 *Dīgha-nikāya*, I, 17–18.

21 T.W. Rhys Davids, trans., *Dialogues of the Buddha*, Part I, SBB, London, 1899, 31.

22 A.K. Warder, *Introduction to Pali*, London, 1963, 198–199.

23 *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 1, 4, 1–3.

24 The three hallmarks of phenomenal existence (i.e. of life in this world as we unenlightened beings experience it): impermanence, suffering, non-self.

25 See also my *Theravada Buddhism: a Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern*

Colombo, London, 1988. The relevant part of this book was written in 1980. It deals only with those aspects of the doctrine relevant to social history, mainly *kamma*; on that topic see further my "Notes on the brahmanical background to Buddhist ethics", in Gatare Dhammapala et al., eds., *Buddhist Studies in Honour of Hammalawa Saddhātissa*, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka, 1984, 91–101.

26 *Majjhima-nikāya*, sutta XXII. See especially Kamaleswar Bhattacharya, "*Diṭṭhaṃ, Sutaṃ, Mataṃ, Viññātaṃ*", in Somaratna Balasooriya et al., ed., *Buddhist Studies in Honour of Walpola Rahula*, London and Sri Lanka, 1980, 10–15, and references there cited. Bhattacharya's article deals with my passage A. He does not translate it, but he glosses it: "All these theories are false because they make of the Ātman an 'object', while the Ātman, the Absolute, the Being in itself, can never be an object." I can see no support in the text for this interpretation.

27 K.R. Norman, "A note on Attā in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*", *Studies in Indian Philosophy: a Memorial Volume in honour of Pandit Sukhlalji Sanghvi*, LD series 84, Ahmedabad, 1981, 19–29.

28 In both extracts my translation eliminates repetitions.

29 *Majjhima-nikāya*, I, 135–36.

30 *Ibid.*, 140–41.

31 *Cetanāhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi, Aṅguttara-nikāya*, III, 415.

32 Most of the rest of this paper represents a revised version of part of my paper "Why there are three fires to put out", delivered at the conference of the International Association of Buddhist Studies in Bologna, July 1985. Though originally I revised it for publication in the proceedings of that conference, the convenor and editor, Professor Pezzali, has kindly let me know that the publication is still (in November 1987) not assured.

33 "*The Waste Land*", 1922, Part III, especially the note on line 308.

34 The *āhitāgni* is the brahmin who has followed the ritual prescription of the Vedic (*śrauta*) tradition and keeps the fires burning for the purposes of his obligatory daily rites.

35 "Tradition holds that one's father is in fact the *gārhapatya* fire, one's mother the *dakṣiṇa*, one's teacher the *āhavanīya*; that triad of fires is the most important." *Manusmṛti*, II, 231.

36 Published by the Pali Text Society, *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, IV, 41–46.

37 The Pāli commentary on this *sutta* is short; it is published in the PTS edition at *Manorathapūraṇī*, IV, 29–30.

38 I am grateful to Professor Schmithausen for pointing out that *ye 'ssa* would be the neatest emendation.

39 See my article "Three souls, one or none: the vagaries of a Pāli pericope" referred to above in note 5.

40 In a letter to me after I had lectured at Brown University.

41 The verse is used in the *aśvamedha*, for instance; but its use in *gṛhya* rites may better account for its being known to Buddhists. Minkowski writes: "As [householders] let their cows out to graze they should recite *mayobhūḥ* etc. (*Āśvalayana Gṛhya Sūtra* 2,10,5). Or when they come back from grazing and are back in the pen (*Śāṃkhāyana Gṛhya Sūtra* 3,9,5). There is also a *gṛhya* festival performed on the full moon of Kārttikī when the cows are honoured and the *mayobhūr* verse is recited (*Śāṃkhāyana G.S.* 3,11,15)."

8

THE BUDDHA'S BOOK OF GENESIS?

Richard Gombrich

Source: *Indo-Iranian Journal* 35 (1992): 159–78.

Relativism is all the rage these days. In some university departments, especially in the United States, and in many other places as well, the view prevails that the meaning of a text is that ascribed to it by each reader or each generation of readers; that it has no objective or inherent meaning, and the grounds for preferring one interpretation to another, if any, are thus political or matters of personal preference. It is hard to believe that anyone who has studied the oeuvre of Roy Norman could continue to maintain this view. For many centuries Asoka's inscriptions lay unread and unrecognised, till in 1837 James Prinsep deciphered the Brāhmī script and revealed to the world the humane policies of a great emperor who was remarkable for the extent to which he tried to avoid using violence. Yet one edict seemed to show, according to the interpretation of the experts, that Asoka did not go so far as to abolish the death penalty. Then in 1975 Norman published an article entitled: "Aśoka and Capital Punishment: notes on a portion of Aśoka's fourth pillar edict, with an appendix on the accusative absolute construction".[1] He showed that the experts had been wrong: the edict refers not to execution but to flogging. Aśoka did abolish the death penalty.

The criminals being punished by Aśoka's officials can have been in no doubt that the text of his edict had an objective meaning: for those accused the emperor's meaning was absolute. Joking apart, however, it is not enough to say that Norman provided a new interpretation of the text: he *discovered* its meaning.

That is not an authoritarian claim to truth. As Karl Popper has shown,[2] all discoveries are hypothetical and liable to revision: Newton's discovery of the laws of physics is a case in point. In general, the validity of Prinsep's decipherment of Asokan Brāhmī has successfully met so many tests that the chance of its being quite wrong is negligible, but there is still room for plenty of disagreement about particular characters. To say that Norman discovered the meaning of the fourth pillar edict is not to say that his view is bound to stand for eternity, but I think it probably will.

The full title of the article announcing this discovery reads almost like a philologist's self-parody, as if a grammatical construction were being considered in the same breath as a matter of life and death. But it makes the point that philological exactitude is indispensable to correct interpretation. As it happens, this particular discovery did not hang on the accusative absolute or hinge on expertise in the historical development of Middle Indo-Aryan languages, the field Norman has made his own. It hinged on the word *vadha*: hitherto it had been interpreted as "killing", a meaning it often bears, but Norman could adduce parallel texts to show that in juridical contexts it normally meant "beating" in the sense of flogging.

Norman's studies of words in Middle Indo-Aryan texts have produced a host of discoveries, the largest number of them concerning the meaning of passages in the Pali Canon. Discovering the meaning of texts which some people hold sacred can have its problems. To show that an edict by Asoka has a certain meaning offends no vested interests and is unlikely to upset anyone but the few scholars who have got it wrong and may be more concerned with their *amour propre* than with the search for truth. A religious text, on the other hand, is embedded in a history of interpretation.

This can be a source of confusion. An important part of the history of a religion is of course how it interprets its own tradition, including its textual tradition. But that does not alter the fact that texts had specific meanings to their original authors, and moreover, since we can assume that those authors were competent communicators, to their original audiences. To uncover those original meanings is not only a legitimate task for the historian, it is of the greatest historical interest. If the original meaning turns out to be very different from that ascribed by later generations, it may upset people; but we should learn from the Buddha that in no area of life is reality inherently pleasant.

For the most part, the interpretation of the Pali canon which has been accepted by the Theravādin tradition has been that embodied in the Pali commentaries. When these were written down, which traditionally is said to have happened late in the first century BCE[3] and is unlikely to have been earlier, they certainly represented an oral tradition of exegesis which in some sense must stretch back to the time of, or immediately after, the Buddha himself. As soon as the texts themselves had been definitively formulated, additional material must have been classified as commentary. Unlike the sacrosanct texts, however, the commentaries were not memorised word for word; they represented a tradition of a far more fluid kind. If we date the death of the Buddha and the initial fixation of the texts of his sermons to the late fifth century BCE and the relative fixation of the commentaries to four centuries later, we are unlikely to be far wrong in deducing the period of oral transmission to have lasted about four centuries.

If we try to discover the original meaning of the Buddha's sermons, we need to know what cultural knowledge and presuppositions he shared with his audience. We must admit, I fear, that we cannot know very much about the Buddha's interlocutors or about what his audiences were thinking or taking for

granted, and to that extent some of what he meant may be lost to us. We may however be slightly better off in this respect than were the authors of the Pali commentaries. Even if we know little of the Buddha's cultural milieu, in some cases our knowledge of historical linguistics and of parallel (mainly brahminical) texts allows us to know things the commentators did not – as Norman's work has amply demonstrated. Though no doubt *in nuce* the commentarial tradition goes back to the first generations of Buddhists in northern India, Trautmann has shown[4] that such important parts of them as those concerning the Buddha's own family relations must have been composed in areas where Dravidian marriage patterns prevailed, i.e., in the southern half of India or Sri Lanka. The composition of the *atthakathā* was thus, to a large extent, separated from that of the *suttas* not only in time but also in space.

Naturally I am not saying that we can ignore the commentarial tradition. I maintain the opposite: that we can both learn from the commentators and learn from their mistakes. What they have recorded for posterity is available to us, but we should not share their assumption that the Buddha's meanings resonate autonomously in timelessness. There is no *a priori* reason to think that an attempt to supplement, or even correct, the information they contain will be fruitless or misguided.

I append some remarks on what T. W. Rhys Davids, the first person to translate the text into English (or into any European language), called "A Book of Genesis".[5] That title well illustrates my overarching theme: that to communicate with an audience one needs to speak in their idiom. Rhys Davids attracted the attention and interest of English-speakers by suggesting an ancient parallel to the Bible in quite another tradition. The title also reflects my narrower theme. Buddhists – not merely Theravādins, but all Buddhists – have indeed hitherto taken the text as being a more or less straight-faced account of how the universe, and in particular society, originated. I contend, on the other hand, that the Buddha never intended to give such an account; that the original intention of the text is satirical. Like Roy Norman, in whose footsteps I am attempting to follow,[6] I shall use as my evidence the adduction of parallel texts and even, with some trepidation, a dash of historical linguistics.

The "Book of Genesis" is the *Aggañña Sutta* (AS).[7] It is ascribed to the Buddha. I accept that ascription, but my argument does not depend on it, being concerned with the text itself, and for the purposes of this paper "the Buddha" simply means the author of AS. Nor does my argument assume that we have before us the text in the exact form in which it was originally recited (at the First Council?).

My argument is that we cannot understand the original meaning of the AS (to its first speaker and audience) unless we realise that it makes several allusions, at crucial points, to brahminical scriptures. Finding allusions to brahminical literature in the early Buddhist texts is a long and difficult business. Were it not so, great scholars like Louis de La Vallée Poussin would not have written that there are no allusions in the Pali texts to the Upaniṣads.[8] Even if all the relevant texts

are put on computer, the search may not be much facilitated. Precise accuracy in quotation was not aimed at or valued in ancient times. Greek and Roman authors are often inaccurate in their quotations, even though they had books and libraries. When the Buddha alluded to a brahminical text, he could only have heard it, and since he was not himself a brahmin it is improbable that he was ever taught such a text or that anyone ever checked his accuracy. Besides, he may have heard a text in a form other than that which was written down many centuries later and has been transmitted to us; in other words, he might be quoting accurately but we could never know it. It is important to bear these conditions in mind when reading the rest of this paper.

Both anthropologists and textual scholars have been discussing the AS in recent years. The anthropologists have been discussing[9] how the Theravādin tradition has used the text as a charter for the institution of kingship and the organization of society into *varṇa*: according to the AS, those social arrangements are man-made rather than divinely ordained, but of primaeval antiquity, so that the Buddha talked of them as things settled long ago, early in our eon – and by implication early in every eon, since the pattern of history repeats itself. Like every reader, the Theravādin tradition has seen that the Buddha denies religious significance to those socio-political arrangements. But the tradition lacks historical awareness and credits the Buddha with omniscience, so it detects no irony in the text, let alone the parodistic character which I see in it.

The bulk of the philological work on the AS in recent years has been published by Professor Ulrich Schneider[10] and his pupil Dr. Konrad Meisig. Dr. Meisig has put me very much in his debt by sending me free copies of his monograph on the AS[11] and his other major publications. Like all his publications, the monograph is extremely learned. Unfortunately, however, I am not able to agree with any of the conclusions that Schneider and Meisig argue for. The present article intends to make a positive contribution to our understanding of the AS, and polemics would be out of place in it; the one point at which I cannot avoid taking issue with Meisig is in my discussion of the text's title below.

In my interpetation, I am essentially combining two unoriginal claims. The first is that the Buddha used humour;[12] the second that he turned the brahmins' claims and terms[13] against them, saying that they had forgotten the true purport of their own traditions. That his criticism of the brahmins used humour is not, I think, hard to accept if one considers an etymology the Buddha gives late in the AS (para. 23): he explains the word *ajjhāyaka*. "reciter of the Veda" (from Skt. *adhyāyaka*), as *a-jhāyaka*, "non-meditator". Incidentally, the pun does not depend on Pali; it would work in Sanskrit and presumably equally well in whatever form of Middle Indo-Aryan the Buddha spoke.

That the Buddha is setting out both to deny the brahmin view of the origin of society and to make fun of it becomes clear at the outset of the AS. Two brahmin converts tell the Buddha that other brahmins are roundly abusing them for having left the brahmin estate and gone over to join the ascetics, whose status is that of *śūdras*. The full meaning of this passage, as of much that

follows, depends on the ambiguity of the word *vaṇṇa*. As is well known, *vaṇṇa*, like Sanskrit *varṇa*, refers to the four estates[14] of society (brahmin, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, *śūdra*), while its primary meaning is "colour", and by extension it means "complexion" or "good looks". The four estates were assigned the symbolic colours of white, red, yellow and black respectively. (Though I know of no allusion to this in a Sanskrit text earlier than the *Mahābhārata*, I believe there is a reference to it in the *Tipiṭaka* at AN, I, 162.) It is also possible that the typical brahmin was fairer than the typical *śūdra* or at least perceived to be so. Thus the brahmins are said to claim that their *vaṇṇa* is white and the other is black.[15] We may assume that the brahmins considered those who had joined the Sangha to have *śūdra* status because the Sangha kept no caste rules of purity, had people from all castes live together and accept food from anyone; we can further assume that they were blacker because they rapidly became sunburnt like *śūdra* labourers.

At the same time the brahmins are reported as saying (para. 3): "The brahmins are pure, non-brahmins are impure. The brahmins are Brahmā's own children, born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā." They describe the Sangha as "shaven-headed little ascetics, menial, black, born of the feet of the kinsman." The kinsman (*bandhu*) in question is the brahmins' kinsman, Brahmā.

The commentary on this passage[16] is very terse and does not reveal which allusions the commentator has caught, except that he does say that the feet at the end are Brahmā's feet. (Both commentary and sub-commentary misunderstand *bandhu*; they take it as "allies of Māra". But that is not significant because they are apparently reading *bandhū*, accusative plural.) The author of the sub-commentary, however, makes it clear that he understands the allusion to the *Puruṣa-sūkta* (*Ṛg-veda* X, 90). He says[17] that the brahmin tradition (*laddhi*) has it that the brahmins were born from Brahmā's mouth, the *kṣatriyas* from his chest, the *vaiśyas* from his thighs and the *śūdras* from his feet. He also reports, no less accurately, that the brahmins are born from Brahmā's mouth because they are born from the words of the Veda (*veda-vacanato*)[18] and that they are Brahmā's heirs because they are worthy of the Vedas and Vedāṅgas.

The first words of the Buddha's reply (para. 4) are that in these insulting remarks the brahmins have forgotten their own traditions. This is the same criticism as he makes of brahmins elsewhere, e.g., in the *Brāhmaṇa-dhammika Sutta*.[19] He claims time and again that the brahmins have forgotten that the true brahmin is a virtuous person, not someone born into a particular social group. The Buddha then consoles his brahmin disciples with a joke: how can brahmins say they are born of Brahmā's mouth, when we can all see that they are born from the wombs of their womenfolk, who have periods, become pregnant, give birth and give suck? The Buddha does not have to spell out that this means that the brahmins have the same impurities from birth as other human beings.

The Buddha then points out that it is enlightened beings who enjoy the highest worldly prestige, and that they may come from any social background.

People from any of the four estates may be wicked (para. 5) or virtuous (para. 6). When talking of vice and virtue the Buddha uses the words for black and white which were used to describe the *vaṇṇa* just above. He then (para. 7) refutes what the brahmins have said by remarking that all four estates have good and bad people in them, but whoever is enlightened is rightly considered top. That righteousness is held to be the best he shows by referring to King Pasenadi (para. 8): the other Sakyas have to behave deferentially to King Pasenadi, but the king shows to the Buddha the same deference that the other Sakyas show to him.

This last argument seems typical of the Buddha. For instance, when he sets out to detail the benefits of becoming an ascetic, the very first that he talks of is the change in circumstance of a slave who always had to wait on his master, but after becoming an ascetic receives deference and material help from his former master.[20]

The Buddha then goes a step further (para. 9). "You," he says, "are of various births, names, clans and families, and have left home for homelessness." (Though the "you" is literally addressed to the two brahmin disciples, the Buddha is looking beyond them to the whole Sangha.) "If you are asked who you are, state that you are ascetics, sons of the Sakyan." But those who have firm faith will properly reply: " 'I am the Blessed One's own child, born of his mouth, born of the Dhamma, created by the Dhamma, heir of the Dhamma.' " For the Buddha is designated "Dhamma-bodied, Brahma-bodied, become Dhamma, become Brahma". This echoes word for word the brahminical formula quoted above, substituting for Brahmā first the Buddha and then the Dhamma, his Teaching. The Buddha is making a serious point, but in language which to his followers must have sounded at least playful and to brahmins scandalous. At first he sounds as if he is equating himself with Brahmā, the creator god, but after a few words he makes clear that the real equation he is making is not of persons but of teachings: his teaching is, for his followers, the true Veda. In the final sentence of the paragraph he hammers home the point that what counts about him is not his individuality but his teaching; he makes the same point elsewhere, in the formula, "He who sees me sees the Dhamma and he who sees the Dhamma sees me."[21] In the formulation he gives here, the language leaves open a further implication, because in the compounds *Brahma-kāyo* and *Brahma-bhūto, brahma-* could be masculine (as suggested by the equation in the previous sentence: the Sangha are the Buddha's sons just as the brahmins are Brahmā's) or neuter (equating the Buddha's Dhamma with *brahman* in the sense of Veda/ultimate truth).

Here (para. 10) the Buddha embarks on the aetiological myth which occupies well over half the text and gives it its name – or names. Eager to support his teacher's intuition that this part of the text originally had no connection with what precedes it, but was later cobbled on, Meisig maintains[22] that the earliest versions of the text we can reconstruct *cannot* have been called *Aggañña Sutta*. I do not know Chinese and so cannot go into details, but according to what Meisig

himself reports,[23] of the three Chinese parallels one is called "The small *sūtra* of origins" *or* "The *sūtra* of the four *varṇa*", the second "The Bhāradvāja hall *sūtra*", and the third "The *sūtra* of origins to the two brahmins Vāsiṣṭha and Bhāradvāja". The word *aggañña* will be discussed below, but the Pali tradition interprets it too as "origins". It is only in this part of the text that the four estates are separately discussed; earlier, as we have seen, only the brahmin and *śūdra* estates are the theme, and the four are merely listed (in paras. 5–7) in a mechanical way. Thus I fail to see that the facts which Meisig painstakingly assembles support his conclusion.

The myth purports to explain the origins of kingship, of the four estates, and of many major features of the universe along the way. Since it is the only ancient Buddhist text to offer any account of the origins of all these important things, it is not at all surprising that Buddhist tradition has taken it literally. I shall however try to show that the purported "myth" is primarily satirical and parodistic in intent.

The very fact that the text is unique in its subject matter has significance. The Buddha several times stated that he was not concerned to preach anything that was not directly relevant to the four noble truths and conducive to salvation. What he preached was as small in extent compared to what he could have talked about as a handful of leaves is to a whole forest.[24] He refused to give any answer to a set of fourteen questions, which included the questions whether the world was eternal in time and infinite in space, by comparing those who troubled with them to a man who, wounded by an arrow, refused treatment of his wound till he had answers to such irrelevant questions as the name of the man who shot the arrow.[25]

The story begins with the world in a phase when it contains only beings who consist of mind, feed on joy, are luminous and live in the air. We soon gather (in the next para.) that they are otherwise undifferentiated, and so are called just "beings" (*sattā*). It may occur to us to wonder in passing why such rarefied creatures merit no grander title. Be that as it may, the beings pass from the sphere of radiance and are reborn in our world (*itthattaṃ āgacchanti*).[26] The world at that time is nothing but water and is completely dark, without heavenly bodies (in the astronomical sense) and without time divisions.

What does this remind us of? Vedic cosmogonies. *Ṛg-veda* X, 129, the most famous Vedic text to explore the mystery of the origin of the universe, begins: *nāsad āsīn no sad āsīt tadānīm*: "There was neither non-existence nor existence then." The second verse says that there was then nothing to distinguish day from night. The third verse begins: "Darkness was hidden in darkness in the beginning; without distinction this all was water." Compare the first words of AS para. 11: *Ekodakī-bhūtṃ kho pana Vāseṭṭha tena samayena hoti andhakāro andhakāra-timisā. Na candima-suriyā paññāyanti . . . na rattin-divā paññāyanti . . .*

The semantic similarity is striking. I also catch verbal assonances. The Vedic hymn beings by asserting that initially there was neither *sat* nor *asat*; for the Buddha this would have been nonsense, and also very hard to express in Pali. It

is easy to see, however, how in turning it into a parodistic narrative he would have called the first beings just plain "beings". There may be another verbal echo too. The first line of the hymn's fourth verse is: *kāmas tad agre samavartatādhi*: "Desire in the beginning came upon that." The semantic parallel to this will occur soon below. Here I tentatively observe that the verb *samavartata* may have been in the Buddha's mind and so account for the rather obscure expression (at the beginning of para. 10) *ayaṃ loko samvaṭṭati*. Taken alone, this argument would be weak, but once one has seen the other affinities between the two texts it may have some force.

So far from seeing a chasm between paras. 9 and 10,[27] I see them as closely related. At the end of para. 9, in my view, the Buddha has been parodying *Ṛg-veda* X, 90. In the next sentences he moves on to a parody of another Vedic hymn, *Ṛg-veda* X, 129. In doing so, incidentally, he starts to fulfil the promise made in the first sentence of his reply to his disciples (beginning of para. 4; see above). On a larger scale, both parodies serve to make a serious point. The message of the cosmogonic one is that while human beings now are hierarchically ranked by birth, this is a human convention and basically we are all the same under the skin – just living beings, equally capable of good and evil.

We have seen above that after setting the scene of watery darkness the Vedic hymn introduces desire as the motive force. Its entrance is unexplained and unoccasioned but somehow *kāma* gets things moving. Desire plays a similar role at the same point in the AS. For Buddhists, however, desire can only be bad, as stated in the second noble truth. In accordance with that truth, the word for desire here is *taṇhā*. It arrives early in para. 12. Unlike the Vedic *Kāma*, however, this desire has an object. A sweet earth (*rasa-paṭhavi*) has spread (*samatāni*) on the water, like the skin on hot milk as it cools; it looks like ghee or cream[28] and tastes as sweet as honey.

This is a skit on *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (BAU) 1, 2. The BAU contains at least three cosmogonies; we are dealing here with the first. It begins with Death, from whom water is born – so again water is the first material element. The text continues: *Tad yad apāṃ śara āsīt, tat samahanyata. sā pṛthivy abhavat:* "Then the milk-skin of the waters congealed and became earth." Monier-Williams gives as a meaning of *śaras* "film on boiled milk". A parallel Pāli form (*saro*?) does not seem to be attested; if it was a rare word it could well have been garbled with the *rasa-paṭhavī* and so lost. The next words in the BAU are: *Tasyām aśrāyat. Tasya śrāntasya taptasya tejoraso niravartatāgnih*: "On it [the earth] he [Death] laboured. Of him, labouring and heated, the essence of heat emerged: fire." That the word *rasa* occurs here may be a coincidence, but I doubt that it is mere coincidence that we have *taptasya* here and *tattassa* in the Pāli. However, even those sceptical about verbal assonances will not deny the affinity of the content.

In the BAU, Death now proceeds to divide himself up to create the universe. The Buddha's story takes quite a different course, since it has a different goal. The beings dip their fingers into the tasty film (like greedy children) and like it

so much that they cannot stop eating it. At this their luminescence disappears – whereupon the sun and moon appear, now that they are needed. This leads to day and night and other time divisions up to the year. Though BAU 1, 2 is quite different, there too, a few sentences beyond the point of convergence, Death gets round to creating the year. He then creates all living creatures (*prajāḥ paśūn*) and begins to eat them, as well as other things like the Vedas. Eating thus plays a part in that story too; but it is then diverted into word-plays which purport to explain how the horse sacrifice came into being. For the esoteric meaning of the horse sacrifice is the principal topic of this section of the BAU.

The principal concern of this section of the AS, on the other hand, is to explain the diversity of *vaṇṇa*. This is first explicitly mentioned in the next para., para. 13. As the beings go on eating, there is discerned among them what one might translate a "discoloration": *vaṇṇa-vevaṇṇatā*. Literally this just means a diversity of *vaṇṇa*. All the meanings of *vaṇṇa* as colour, complexion and good looks are in play here, with its social meaning looming large in the background. When all the creatures have been guzzling the sweet earth for a long time, some keep their *vaṇṇa* (good looks) while others get bad *vaṇṇa* (grow ugly). Then the beings who still have their looks despise the uglier ones (just as the brahmins at the beginning of the text were despising people of low *vaṇṇa*). If this myth were meant to be taken seriously as a cosmogony, the failure to explain why the same behaviour should affect some but not others would be a logical flaw; but such criticism is hardly appropriate to a parody. On the other hand, the story suggests to me that, while it is certainly nicer to be handsome than ugly, what the Buddha is pinpointing as the real tragedy is the differentiation itself.

It is this differentiation that leads to the vice of contempt, and it is as a result of this arrogance about *vaṇṇa* (*vaṇṇātimāna*) that the sweet earth disappears. At this the beings got together "and lamented, 'Oh the taste, Oh the taste!' So even nowadays when people get something sweet-tasting they say the same thing; they repeat that same primaeval expression but do not understand its point."

The expression *aho rasaṃ*, which I have translated "Oh the taste!" may express a variety of emotions. The text is saying that what is now an expression of appreciation ("How delicious!") originated as a lament ("Alas for the taste!").

Again the text here seems illogical, even silly, if one takes it literally. But it is simply a parody of the etymologies (*nirukti*) in which the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads abound. These etymologies are not botched attempts at history or linguistics by people who did not know any better (and produced *vyākaraṇa*!) but attempts to discover some eternal inner significance in the Sanskrit language, which they conceived of as a blueprint for reality.[29] The Buddha did not accept that view of Sanskrit, and is making fun of it and the resultant etymologising. There is a parallel passage a little later in the text, at the end of para. 15, where the expression he pretends to explain is *ahu vata no, ahȳi vata no*. This must be a pair of idioms close to English "We've had it, it's given out on us". I have not yet found a very close Vedic parallel to these expressions, but that hardly matters: to see what the Buddha had in mind one need look no further than the

beginning of the next cosmogony in the BAU, at I, 4, 1: *ātmaivedam agra āsīt puruṣavidhaḥ. So 'nuvīkṣya nānyad ātmano 'paśyat. So 'ham asmīty agre vyāharat. Tato 'haṃnāmbhavat. Tasmād apy etarhy āmantritaḥ: aham ayam ity evāgra uktvā, athānyan nāma prabrūte yad asya bhavati.* "In the beginning this was just the self in human form. He looked round and saw nothing other than himself. His first utterance was 'I am'. Thence came the term 'I'. So even nowadays when one is addressed one first says just 'I am here' and then any other name one has."

Incidentally, I have already pointed out that there are satirical references to this cosmogony elsewhere in the Pāli *suttas*.[30]

It is here that first occurs in the text the word *aggañña* which gives it its title. The commentary *ad loc.*[31] glosses: *aggaññaṃ akkharan ti lok-uppatti-vaṃsa-katham*: "story of the lineage of/from the origin of the world" – evidently a rather impressionistic rendering. Modern lexicographers (CPD and PED) have conjectured *aggañña* to be a collateral form of *aggaññu*, derived from Skt. *agra-jña*, "origin-knowing". Even if that meaning would suit the title, it makes no sense where the word occurs within the text. It occurs five times, always immediately following *porāṇa*, with which it thus appears to be virtually synonymous. So it should mean "primaeval" or "original". Where later in the text the word occurs in the instrumental, the commentator glosses:[32] *aggaññenā ti aggan ti ñātena agge vā ñātena*: "known as top or known as in the beginning (i.e., original)". He seems to be interpreting *-ñña* as derived from *-jña* but passive in meaning, which surely will not do.

The *Abhidhānappadīpikā*[33] gives *aggañña* as a synonym of *para* and *uttama*, both words for "supreme"; it thus assigns no detectable meaning to the *-ñña*.

According to the CPD *s.v.*, Helmer Smith posited a relation with Sanskrit *agra-ṇī*, "leading in front". The Sanskrit accusative singular *agraṇyam* is parallel to Pāli *aggaññaṃ*. But we also find the instrumental singular *aggaññena* (cited above) and the nominative plural masculine *aggaññā*.[34] The latter occurs at the beginning of the *Ariyavaṃsa Sutta* (AN II, 27), where the commentator's gloss[35] is *aggā ti jānitabbā*: "to be known as top" – evidently another attempt to derive the *-ñña* from *-jña*.

One could certainly take *aggaññena* and *aggaññā* as analogical formations within Pali: from the accusative singular *aggaññaṃ* an ordinary thematic stem *aggañña* is deduced and inflected. However, I would prefer to posit an adjectival suffix *-ñña* formed on the analogy of *brahmañña*. In the *Ariyavaṃsa Sutta* is the series of four words in the nominative plural masculine: *aggaññā rattaññā vaṃsaññā porāṇā*. The commentarial tradition explains both *rattaññaa* and the much commoner *rattaññu* as deriving from *-jña*, but in his study of the word[36] Roy Norman has shown this to be unlikely. And what about *vaṃsañña*? The commentator again tries to gloss it with *jānitabba*, but that will not do. I do not see *-jña* here either; I posit another analogical formation with a mere adjectival suffix, so that *vaṃsañña* would mean "of (true) lineage". In any case, whether one prefers Helmer Smith's interpretation or mine (and I must admit that on past

form a sensible punter would back Smith), *aggañña* means something like "primaeval" and has nothing to do with "knowing".

The *Ariyavaṃsa Sutta* merits a short digression, because it offers further parallels with the AS. It was so popular in traditional Sinhala Buddhism that there was a special festival for its preaching.[37] At first sight this seems odd, in that the short text does not look particularly interesting. Its main message is that there are four kinds of persons who are said to be noble: one who is satisfied with any stuff to wear as a robe; ditto with any alms food; ditto with any lodging; and one who delights in meditation and renunciation. Obviously these four figures are all Buddhist monks and may in fact be the same person or persons. So why is the message expressed in the apparently roundabout way and why are the four figures called *ariyavaṃsa*, "of noble lineage"?[38]

The point is that the sermon has the same message as the AS, and likewise works by reinterpreting brahminical terminology. It begins: *Cattāro 'me bhikkhave ariyavaṃsā aggaññā rattaññā vaṃsaññā porāṇā asaṃkiṇṇā asaṃkiṇṇapubbā na saṃkīyanti na saṃkīyissanti appaṭikuṭṭhā samaṇehi brāhmaṇehi viññūhi.* "O monks, these four are of noble lineage, original, experienced, of true lineage, ancient, unmixed: they have never been mixed, they are not mixed and they will not be mixed; they are not criticised by ascetics or brahmins of understanding." The main allusion seems to be to the brahmin concept of *varṇa-saṃkara*, "mixture of estates", the miscegenation which they regarded as the road to ruin. Just as in the AS the Buddha answers brahmins who accuse his disciples of being low-caste and plays around punningly with the concept of *varṇa*, here too he must be answering a similar allegation that by accepting people of any social status the Sangha causes *varṇa-saṃkara*. Since the estates are hereditary, they could be referred to as lineages. I am slightly puzzled only by the fact that in the brahmin view the top three estates alone are "noble", the *śūdra* definitely not: could this somehow be reflected in the way that the fourth person of noble lineage in the Buddha's formulation is not really parallel to the other three? This sermon has been transmitted to us without the introduction which would make the context explicit, and also has a puzzling little final section which seems not to fit (and is very corrupt), so the tradition is clearly defective in any case. Nevertheless, the parallel to the AS is instructive.

I return to the "etymologies" in the AS. The word or words being "explained" are referred to as *akkhara*, from Sanskrit *akṣara*. This means "imperishable" and in Sanskrit is used to refer to a word or syllable, in accordance with the theory that Sanskrit was eternal. Not accepting that theory, the Buddha seems to have used the word more flexibly, if the text is to be trusted. The third time it occurs, at the end of para. 16, it refers to a *custom* at weddings which is not verbal. It could be just that the custom is characterised as unvarying; but I incline to think that by the levelling process typical of oral transmission the word *akkharaṃ* has mistakenly been added (ousting another word?) after *porāṇaṃ aggaññam.*

Later, each of the eight words etymologised in paras. 21–25 is said to be an *akkhara*, which is natural; but then they are said to be evolved *porāṇena*

aggaññena akkharena, "by the ancient, original expression". The sub-commentary here (on para. 21) glosses *akkhara* as *nirutti*, which certainly catches the drift, but for *akkhara* to mean "etymology" is odd, and I wonder whether the text did not originally read that our terms thus evolved *from* the ancient, original expressions.

When the sweet earth has disappeared and the beings have lamented its loss, there appears a kind of mushroom or fungus of similar properties. The whole cycle is then repeated, for no apparent reason, till that too disappears. Then in its place comes a similarly delicious and attractive creeper, and the cycle, with further differentiation of *vaṇṇa*, is gone through a third time.

Why are there three cycles? True, the Buddhist texts tend to say things three times, but that does not explain the three different kinds of food which lead to downfall. The question may be pointless, or at least unanswearble. But the particular sequence of foods does seem as if it must have meant something. The first we have found in the BAU, but the mushroom and the creeper we have not yet located in the Vedic literature. Or have we?

It is commonly accepted that from late Vedic times until the present day brahmins have used in their *soma* sacrifices various plants which they know and say to be substitutes for the original *soma*, and that by preference they use a creeper. For example, Sāyaṇa says: "If they cannot obtain the *soma* whose characteristics are described in the sacred text, then they may use the species of creeper (*latā*) which is known as *pulīka*."[39]

The original *soma* plant is described in the *Ṛg-veda* with so much figurative and hyperbolic language that its identity is obscure, and perhaps no subject in Indology has been so much contested by scholars. In 1968 R. Gordon Wasson caused a brief stir with his theory that *soma* was a mushroom, the *amanita muscaria*.[40] That theory is no longer popular and I doubt it myself, but I do not regard it as definitively refuted. It is possible that at the time of the Buddha the brahmins had some oral tradition about the original identity of *soma* and that the Buddha is alluding to that and making fun of the brahmins' liking for *soma*, its subsequent disappearance from their world, and its replacement by a creeper.[41] I freely admit that this is a bold hypothesis; I shall be glad to withdraw it as soon as someone produces a more plausible explanation for the three types of mythical food in the AS.

I have found one more allusion to brahminical literature in the AS. This one is not to a Vedic text but to the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtras*. The text prescribes the way of life of a brahmin ascetic who has renounced the householder's life. The striking words which AS echoes are at 2, 11, 22, but it is necessary to give the whole passage from 2,11,16 on.

> 2,11,16: *parivrājakaḥ parityajya bandhūn aparigrahaḥ pravrajed yathāvidhi* 17: *araṇyaṃ gatvā* 18: *śikhāmuṇḍaḥ* 19: *kaupīnācchādanaḥ* 20: *varṣāsv ekasthaḥ* 21: *kāṣāyavāsāḥ* 22: *sannamusale vyaṅgāre nivṛttaśarāvasaṃpāte bhikṣeta*[42]

> 16: "A wandering renunciate should leave his family and go forth without possessions according to the rule. (17:) Going to the forest (18:) with his head shaven except for a topknot, (19:) wearing a loin-cloth, (20:) staying in one place during the rains, (21:) with a yellow-stained outer garment, (22:) he should beg food when the pestle has been laid down, there are no live embers, and the collecting of the plates is over."

As against this, we get in AS para. 22 the picture of the original good brahmins: *araññāyatane paṇṇakuṭṭiyo karitvā paṇṇakuṭīsu jhāyanti, vītaṅgārā vītadhūmā paṇṇamusalā sāyaṃ sāyamāsāya pāto pātarāsāya gāma-nigama-rājadhāniyo osaranti ghāsam esanā.* "In the forest they make leaf huts and meditate in them, and with no live embers or smoke, pestles laid down, they go round villages, towns and capital cities to seek food, in the evening for their evening meal, in the morning for their morning meal." I have no hesitation in reading *sannamusalā*, the *paṇṇa-* evidently being a corruption caused by the occurrence of that word twice in the preceding few words.[43]

There are so many points of interest in the Baudhāyana passage that it would deserve an article to itself; he goes on to say in *sūtra* 26 that the ascetics he is describing reject Vedic rites and say that they are adhering to the middle path, delimited to both sides (*ubhayataḥ paricchinnā madhyamaṃ padaṃ saṃśliṣyāmha iti vadantaḥ*), which sounds like an allusion to the Buddhists, even if the passage as a whole may be giving a more composite picture. (There are also variant readings to consider.)[44] Here I must restrict myself to the point of closest similarity, the laying aside of the pestle and the dying out of the fire. The relationship between the two texts is intriguing. Baudhāyana is saying that the wandering ascetic, who can of course have no fire of his own, should beg food at a time when the household has not only finished cooking but also eating their meal – the plates have been collected. In this way he will be sure to get nothing but the true leftovers. This makes perfect sense for an ascetic. In the AS the brahmins described are not wanderers, but live in leaf huts, where however they do no cooking. The two striking adjectives which the two texts have in common, *sannamusala* and *vyarigāra*, apply to the ascetic brahmins, not to the people from whom they are begging.

The wording of the *Manusmṛti* carries the same message as Baudhāyana but has an extra echo of the AS:

> *vidhūme sannamusale vyaṅgāre bhuktavajjane*
> *vṛtte śarāvasaṃpāte bhikṣāṃ nityaṃ yatiś caret* (6.56)

"A renunciate should always go begging when the pestle has been laid down, there is no smoke or live embers, people have finished eating and the plates have been collected." The Pāli *vītadhūma* and the Sanskrit *vidhūma* obviously correspond.

I doubt that it is possible to settle the exact chronological relation between the AS and the brahminical phraseology. The *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtras* are in a sense quite undatable, as they are a compilation of oral material; any date could refer only to the final redaction. The *Manusmṛti* dates from the early centuries of the common era and here evidently draws on the older *sūtras*. Though Baudhāyana seems to refer to the Buddhists, it is most unlikely that he (or Manu) would quote the AS; besides, we have seen that the terms the texts have in common fit the brahminical better than the Buddhist context.

I doubt that the AS passage is intended to describe a real historical phenomenon. The Buddha in para. 22 is describing ideal brahmin hermits who did meditate (they were *jhāyaka*) in order to contrast them in para. 23 with others who were incompetent at meditating and composed (Vedic) mantras, so that they were dubbed "non-meditators" (*ajjhāyaka* – in fact, reciters of the Veda). Para. 22 is needed to set up the joke. The Buddha is talking about brahmins, and has apparently borrowed a piece of their phraseology, but twisted it to suit his purpose – as he has done with their other texts.

The AS raises many issues which I cannot here pursue. But I need to say a few more words about the "etymologies". I regard it as pointless to devise ingenious theories to give phonetic perfection to the puns which in paras. 21–25 provide "etymologies" for terms of social status. We have to look no further than the last Upaniṣadic passage cited above to see that the brahminical *nirukti* were phonetically quite imprecise. I have quoted the beginning of BAU 1, 4, 1; its next sentence reads; *sa yat pürvo 'smāt sarva-smāt sarvān pāpmana auṣat tasmāt puruṣaḥ*. "He [the self] is called *puruṣa* [man: another term for the self] because being prior (*PŪRva*) to all this [universe] he burnt up (*UṢ*) all evils." If the Buddha were following the style of such a passage seriously, he might perhaps try to improve on it, but if he is doing so in a spirit of parody, the wilder the phonetics the better the joke. I am not aware that any of the eight etymologies in the AS is based on a *specific* brahminical etymology. It may however be of interest to note in passing that the etymology of *rājā* in para. 21, *dhammena pare rañjeti*, which seems to mean "he pleases others by righteousness" (surely yet another joke), has brahminical links. I know of no brahminical attempt earlier than the *Mahābhārata*[45] to connect *rājan* with the meaning "to please". But in the *Atharva-veda*, which may well be older than the AS, there is a similar etymology from the root *raj*: *so 'rajyata tato rājanyo 'jāyata*.[46] This is the first line of a hymn and there is little context to aid an interpretation, but the subject seems to be the creator Prajāpati and the line means something like "He was excited/delighted and thence/from him the royal was born."

Like Steven Collins,[47] I am sure that Mahāsammata, which was taken by later Buddhist tradition to be the proper name of the first king, is in the AS intended not as a proper name but as a description. *Prima facie, mahāsammata* simply means "agreed to be great", "agreed on as great"; the construction is the same as in *hīnasammata* and *seṭṭhasammata* ("agreed to be inferior" and "... best") in para. 23. At the beginning of para. 21, it is given another "etymology":

mahājana-sammato, "agreed on by the public". This does not exclude the first interpretation; on the contrary, it is characteristic of this style of "etymologising" that as many "derivations" are squeezed out of a word as possible.[48] Collins has other interesting associations of the term to suggest.

To avoid misunderstanding, let me say that I am not maintaining that the Buddha never did etymologising in the *nirukti* style except as a joke, any more than I am saying that all his sermons are satirical. Roy Norman has, for instance, brilliantly emended the text of the *Sabhiya-sutta* to make coherent a poem in which the Buddha uses such punning to show how he thinks various moral and religious terms should be used.[49] The Buddha (and later Buddhists) used this as a didactic device, without claiming that language was grounded in reality. Thus in their spirit I can say that Norman is so called because he is "norm-man", the man from whom we draw our norms; this is a serious remark about Norman but not a serious piece of linguistics.

Finally: what can we deduce (*pace* Meisig) about the history of the text? The Pali commentaries, being unaware of the allusions, were naturally therefore also unaware of the text's ironic character. The same holds, one might say a *fortiori*, for the other Buddhist traditions. The *Mahāvastu* wishes to trace the Buddha's royal lineage from its very beginning, which by then must mean from the first king of all, Mahāsammata; and in that context it virtually quotes the AS, containing a passage[50] closely parallel to AS paras. 10–21. (The rest of the text is not there because it is obviously irrelevant to the *Mahāvastu*'s purpose at that point.) Comparing the two versions is instructive, though it would take me beyond my theme to go into detail. The *Mahāvastu* rounds off irregularities and irons out difficulties. Everything essential to my purpose can be gleaned by comparing para. 11 of the AS with the parallel passage in the *Mahāvastu*. The *Mahāvastu* omits the first sentence of the Pali paragraph, quoted above: *Ekodakī-bhūtaṃ . . . andhakāra-timisā*. This was the passage which alerted us to the parallel with the cosmogonic hymn *Ṛg-veda* X, 129. Likewise, a few lines on, the *Mahāvastu* has missed out – or rather, garbled – the allusion to "the milk-skin of the waters" from BAU 1, 2. Where the Pali has the sweet earth spread out on the waters, the *Mahāvastu* reads: *ayam api mahāpṛthivī udakahradaṃ viya samudāgacchet*:[51] "And this great earth arose all together like a lake of water." Yet the *Mahāvastu* has not lost all trace of what the passage originally said. A few words later this "great earth" is said to look like *kṣīra-saṃtānam* or *sarpi-saṃtānam*, "a spread of milk or a spread of ghee". This not only recalls the meaning of the AS; it also recalls the verb *samatāni*, which describes the "spreading" of the sweet earth on the water. It is even possible, though I would not wish to press the point, that in the Pali phrase at this point *sampannaṃ vā sappi sampannaṃ vā navanītaṃ* the word *sampannaṃ* has come in from the previous line and we should emend to *sappi-saṃtānaṃ* etc.

Let me summarise what I think this shows. If we had only the *Mahāvastu* and not the Pali AS, the allusions to brahminical texts, of which the author/editor was not aware, would be lost to us. When we are aware of what was there, we

can catch both the similarity in content and even the verbal echoes – the reader will not have failed to notice the similarity between how the *Mahāvastu* recalls the AS and how I showed earlier that the AS recalls the BAU. The *Mahāvastu* may not be entirely useless for a critical history of the text: the *sarpi-saṃtānam* gives us an idea for a *possible* emendation to the Pali. This fact is however dwarfed by the massive fact that the *Mahāvastu* has forgotten the original meaning of the passage.[52] However many versions in however many languages agreed with the *Mahāvastu* in saying that at this point the great earth arose like a lake of water, their testimony would count for nothing against the single Pali version which is so obviously meaningful.

Notes

1 *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1975, 1, pp. 16–24.
2 Karl R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, London 1959.
3 *Mahāvaṃsa* XXXIII, 100. The commentaries were at that stage probably in the spoken language; the Pali version which has come down to us is due to Buddhaghosa and other later authors.
4 Thomas R. Trautmann, *Dravidian Kinship*, Cambridge 1981, pp. 316–330.
5 *Dialogues of the Buddha, Part III*, London 1921, pp. 77–94.
6 I am grateful for his comments on an earlier version of this article, as indeed for guiding a great deal of my work since he first taught me in 1974. I owe him too much to be able to claim any profound originality.
7 *Dīgha Nikāya sutta* xxvii. For convenience I shall use the Pali Text Society edition and refer to its paragraph numbers.
8 L. de La Vallée Poussin, *La morale bouddhique*, Paris 1927, p. 12.
9 See especially M. B. Carrithers, "Review Article: *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: a Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background* by S. J. Tambiah", *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 8, 1987, pp. 95–105, which alludes to some of the points made below in this article; also the same author's "Buddhists without History", *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 21, 1987, pp. 165–168.
10 "Acht Etymologien aus dem Aggañña-Suttanta", pp. 575–583 in *Asiatica: Festschrift Friedrich Weller*, Leipzig 1954; "Ein Beitrag zur Textgeschichte des *Aggañña-Suttanta*", *Indo-Iranian Journal* 1, 1957, pp. 253–285.
11 *Das Sūtra von den vier Ständen*, Wiesbaden 1988.
12 Walpola Rahula, "Humour in Pali Literature", *Journal of the Pāli Text Society* 9, 1981, pp. 156–173.
13 K. R. Norman, "Theravāda Buddhism and Brahmanical Hinduism: Brahmanical Terms in a Buddhist Guise", paper delivered at the Buddhist Forum, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 9 May 1990.
14 Anthropologists have alerted us to the need to reserve the word "caste" to translate *jāti*.
15 Here and throughout the paper I am abbreviating the text; only words in quotation marks are intended as literal renditions. I thus pass over many points of detail. But perhaps I should mention here, as it is relevant to my main theme, that the reported criticism by the brahmins begins with the words: "The brahmin is the best *vaṇṇa*, the other *vaṇṇa* is inferior. The brahmin is the white *vaṇṇa*, the other *vaṇṇa* is black." A variant, but clearly inferior, reading puts the other *vaṇṇas* in the plural. In the first sentence the commentator, reasonably, takes "the other *vaṇṇa*" as a collective singu-

lar and glosses: "the other three *vaṇṇa*". It is of course ambiguous, as this is not a legal treatise but a piece of polemical rhetoric. But it is only the *śūdra* who are black and born of Brahmā's feet; the focus is on them, not on the intermediate *vaṇṇa*.

16 *Sumaṅgala-vilāsinī*, P.T.S. ed., III, 861–2.
17 *Dīghanikāyaṭṭhakathāṭīkā Līnatthavaṇṇanā*, P.T.S. ed., III, 47.
18 *Ibid.*, III, 46. Perhaps *veda-vacanato* should be translated "in respect of the words of the Veda".
19 *Sutta-nipāta* vv. 284–315.
20 *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*, DN I, 60–61.
21 SN III, 120.
22 *Op. cit.*, p. 8.
23 *Ibid.*, pp. 8–10.
24 SN V, 437–8.
25 *Culla Māluṅkyaputta Sutta*, MN *sutta* lxiii.
26 Commentary: they are reborn as humans. The text seems to leave no room for the evolution of living beings other than humans. That again fits the loose logic of a parody but would beg questions if it were seriously intended as an account of how all the types of living beings in the Buddhist cosmos (the five or six *gati*) came into existence.
27 This is the point at which Schneider and Meisig claim that two originally separate texts have been cobbled together.
28 My wife Dr. Sanjukta Gupta, who is both a Sanskritist and an Indian with practical experience of the matter, assures me that though the dictionaries translate *navanīta* "fresh butter", it is the cream which rises to the top as one begins to churn or stir milk.
29 This has been admirably explained, with special reference to Yāska's *Nirukta*, by Eivind Kahrs: "Yāska's use of *kasmāt*", *Indo-Iranian Journal* 25, 1983, pp. 231–7.
30 "Recovering the Buddha's Message", pp. 5–20 in Tadeusz Skorupski (ed.), *The Buddhist Forum*, vol. 1, London 1990, p. 13.
31 *Sumaṅgala-vilāsinī*, p. 868.
32 *Ibid.*, p. 870.
33 Cited CPD *s.v.*
34 Though on balance, for reasons given in the text, I incline not to accept Helmer Smith's derivation, there is a piece of evidence which just *might* support him. In the parallel passage in the *Mahāvastu* (of which more in the text below), the word here is printed by Senart, on all four occurrences, as *agninyaṃ* (I, 340, 17; 341, 10; 342, 6; 342, 16). There are no parallels to the passages where the Pali has the instrumental. Radhagovinda Basak, who claims to have reprinted Senart's text, has by accident or design printed *agrinyaṃ* each time (*Mahāvastu Avadāna* I, Calcutta 1963). Allowing for the fluctuations in spelling hybrid Sanskrit, this might be the *aluk samāsa agrenyam* "leading in the beginning", therefore "foremost" or "original". One would need to re-examine the *Mahāvastu* mss.
35 *Manoratha-pūraṇī* III, 45.
36 K. R. Norman, "Eleven Pāli Etymologies", *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 11, 1987, pp. 33–49 (*rattaññu/a* on pp. 40–41). He derives the word from **rātnya*, which he translates "possessing jewels". Despite the evidence he presents, I would prefer to take it as "connected with jewel(s)" and see the jewel in question as the Sangha itself; but this merits separate discussion.
37 Walpola Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon: the Anuradhapura Period*, Colombo 1956, pp. 268–273.
38 I interpret the word as a *bahuvrīhi* compound. It could be a *karmadhāraya*; that would hardly affect the meaning.

39 Commentary on the *Tāṇḍya Brāhmaṇa* 9, 5, 3. I have taken the citation (in translation) from Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, "Part Two: The Post-Vedic History of the Soma Plant", in R. Gordon Wasson, *Soma: Divine Mushroom of Immortality*, New York and The Hague, 1968, pp. 96–7.

40 See previous note.

41 The most sensible suggestion seems to a non-specialist like myself to be that of Harry Falk, that *soma* was ephedra. ("Soma I and II", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* LII, part 1, 1989, pp. 77–90). Wasson certainly made mistakes, but on the other hand I have not been convinced by Brough's polemics (cited by Falk). If Falk is right in arguing that *soma* was the ephedra creeper all along, my hypothesis could only be right if the brahmins *thought* that it was a substitute.

42 Ed. E. Hultzsch, *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* VIII, 4, Leipzig 1884, p. 65.

43 The commentator apparently read *panna-* and took it as the past passive participle of the root *pat* "fall". The Nalanda edition (accordingly?) also reads *panna-*.

44 See especially Hultzsch, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

45 Minoru Hara, "A note on the Epic Folk-etymology of rājan", *Journal of the Ganganath Jha Research Institute*, XXV, pp. 489–99.

46 *Atharva-veda* 15, 8, 1. I owe this reference to the kindness of Eivind Kahrs.

47 "Notes on the word *mahāsammata* and the idea of a Social Contract in Buddhism", ms. 1990.

48 No satisfactory translation of so multivalent a word is possible, but Rhys Davids' "Great Elect" is not perhaps the happiest choice.

49 "Four etymologies from the *Sabhiya-sutta*", in Somaratna Balasooriya et al. (ed.), *Buddhist Studies in Honour of Walpola Rahula*, London 1980, pp. 173–184.

50 *Le Mahāvastu* I, ed. É. Senart, Paris 1882, p. 338 line 13 to p. 348 line 6.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 339 line 7.

52 Other instances of this are not directly relevant to the theme of this article so I reserve them for a future publication.

9

ASSISTING THE DEAD BY VENERATING THE LIVING

Merit transfer in the early Buddhist tradition

John C. Holt

Source: *Numen* 28, 1 (1981): 1–28.

Death is an inevitable fact of life. For the religious as well as for some others, its occurrence does not necessarily imply life's termination or the final end of conscious being. In most traditional, and even in some post-traditional cultures, death is regarded as a transitional experience, a *rite de passage*: the deceased leaves behind the familiar vicissitudes of human life and enters into a new modality of being beyond. Funeral rites, perhaps the oldest religious rites known to human-kind, serve as a means to facilitate this transition. In this article, it is not my intention to speculate upon the metaphysical truth of this almost ubiquitous pattern of belief and rite. Generally, I am more interested in determining how religious interpretations of death valorize the human meaning of life. For reflection upon the meaning of death is but another way of reflecting upon the central significance of life. Specifically, I will focus upon early Indian Buddhist conceptions of death: their cultural origins, cosmological significance, philosophical rationale, and social implications.

Buddhist interpretations of death did not originate in an historical or cultural vacuum. Conceptions of the after-life, and the prescribed behavior relating to the dead, were modified adaptations of prevailing Brāhmaṇical patterns of belief. This is especially apparent when we examine the beliefs and practices of the early Buddhist laity.

While Buddhist monks were intent upon gaining release from the cyclical *saṃsāric* pattern of death and rebirth, the laity were fundamentally concerned with performing meritorious actions in this life that would improve their condition in the next. Eventually, a lay person might embark upon the renunciatory monastic path leading to *nirvāna*. But until that step was taken, performing moral acts of auspicious karmic efficacy provided the best assurance that life after death need not be feared. According to this basic Buddhistic understanding, one of the most meritorious acts that one might perform consisted of giving gifts

to the monastic community and transferring the merit of that action to one's deceased kin. Psychologically and philosophically, giving material amenities to the monastic community and merit to one's departed kin was evidence that the giver had cultivated a healthy mental disposition characterized by selflessness, compassion and charity. Cosmologically, the giver not only increased the likelihood of better rebirth for himself, but also provided an opportunity for deceased kin to share in the karmic benefits of merit. The *Petavatthu*, a popular collection of short sermons belatedly granted Pāli canonical status, frequently describes how one's suffering deceased kin are transferred to a more blissful state by meritorious deeds performed on their behalf. Socially, the effective material transactions involved in merit transfer sustained the monastic community and fostered a reciprocal relationship between the laity and the *bhikkhusaṅgha*. In exchange for receiving material amenities, the sheer presence of virtuous *bhikkhus* presented the laity with an opportunity to make merit. In short, merit transfer was a practical and popular expression of Buddhist piety that was theoretically legitimate, cosmologically potent, and socially redeeming.

From the perspective of the history of religions, this complex of patterns associated with merit transfer also illustrates how the early Buddhist tradition accommodated and transformed fundamental Brāhmaṇical conceptions concerned with the status of the dead and the behavior of the living in relation to the deceased. Before the appearance of Buddhist theories of karmic action, people of the Brāhmaṇical tradition systematically engaged in the performance of rites designed to assist the dead in the nether world. The Buddhist incorporation and rationalization of this Brāhmaṇical pattern reveals an emerging and uniquely Buddhistic conception of death which in turn reflects a changing regard for the significance of life. Buddhism has been frequently characterized by Western observers as pre-eminently given to other-worldly pursuits on the basis of its allegedly pessimistic view of this-worldly life. In the following pages, I will contend that Buddhist transformations of Brāhmaṇical beliefs and rites concerning death portray a somewhat different picture: an increasing importance attached to this-worldly existence and an optimistic ethical imperative to live the good life.

Death and after-life in the Brāhmaṇical tradition

The early poets of Vedic tradition rarely speculated upon the fate of the dead. Vedic religion recognized the finitude of human life, but focussed almost exclusively upon maintaining favorable living conditions in this world. Throughout the hymnodic *saṃhitās* and the later ritualistic *brāhmaṇas*, there exists no systematic or substantial exposition of the nature of the after-life or of the obligations of the living to the dead. Yet, pertinent passages in the funeral hymns of the *Ṛg* and *Atharva Vedas*, when understood within the context of ancient funeral rites still operative within Indian society today, indicate a normative pattern of belief.

The most important passages that relate to the topic of this article concern the

conception of a class of beings known as *pitaras* (fathers, ancestors). According to the *Ṛg Veda*, the recently deceased might embark upon one of two paths: one that led to the realm of the *devas* (gods) and one that led to the fathers' world.[1] In a *Ṛg Veda Soma Pavamāna* hymn, the pathway leading to the realm of the *pitaras* tends to be identified as the standard route.[2] The *Atharva Veda* mentions the *pitaras*' route without any reference to the route leading to the *deva* abode.[3] Thus, it seems likely that the pathway leading to the father's world was understood by many to constitute the normative destiny of the deceased.

When the deceased arrived in the father's world, Yama, king of this realm, provided the new arrival with a new body.[4] In later traditions, including the Buddhist, Yama figures prominently in pronouncing judgement upon the dead.[5] But in *Ṛg Veda* literature proper, neither he nor Varuṇa, who is frequently associated with the principle of order (*ṛta*), function in this capacity.[6] After being established in the fathers' realm, the deceased enjoyed various pleasurable amenities in a paradisiac setting. The fathers, bathed in a continual stream of light (a motif that suggests their newly gained heavenly status)[7] enjoyed a diet that consisted of *svadhā*, (food that provides them with their essential powers),[8] milk, ghee, honey and *soma* (all of which constitute the traditional sacrificial libations). In short, the realm of the fathers seems to represent an ethereal projection of the perfect human existence, a scenario which led A. B. Keith to write: "The picture is relatively simple: it is merely the pleasant things of earth to the priestly imagination, heaped upon one another . . ."[9]

But more importantly, the fathers are imagined as being perfectly capable of determining their own actions on the basis of their own wills.[10] Because they maintain the power to act upon their own volitions, they represent a source of power that can be tapped by the living. Indeed, they appear to be anxious to come to the aid of their surviving kin, especially those descendants who provide for them regularly by offering sacrifices.[11] There existed, therefore, a symbiotic relationship between the living and the dead. In *Ṛg* Vedic literature, the living call upon the fathers for various types of aid: for assistance in battle, for food, and for rain. However, the primary appeal made by the living is for help in continuing the family lineage.[12] The fathers had a vested interest in furthering the family line; for, in order to be sustained, they needed sacrifices performed in their honor. Thus, they more than welcome appeals for offspring, especially males.

This pattern of relationship between the living and the dead closely resembles the Vedic conception of the relationship between human beings and the *devas*. Just as the majority of Brāhmaṇical rituals were designed to appease the *devas*, thereby sustaining their associated natural and cosmic powers for the purpose of maintaining favorable this-worldly living conditions, so also the fathers, when nourished by ritual sacrifices, would benevolently return the favor of sacrifice by granting boons to descendants. One's ancestors, therefore, were understood to play a continuing active role in the affairs of this-worldly existence.

In later developing Brāhmaṇical tradition, the fate of the dead was somewhat

modified. Upaniṣadic conceptions indicate that *pitaras* were not considered immortal, but eventually underwent a dissolution by returning to the five basic elements of the cosmos.[13] Yet, even with the Upaniṣadic introduction of karmic theories of rebirth, a theodicy which would appear to have displaced the ancient pattern of belief in the *pitaras* status, the fundamental pattern of relationship between the living and the ancestors was not significantly altered. Indeed, the fate of the dead was further elaborated and the cosmological status of the fathers classified to resemble the three-fold classification of the heavenly *devas*.[14] Corresponding to this developing cosmological schema, a system of ritual sacrifices was designed to insure that the recently deceased could safely ascend through this triple realm of the departed beyond human life. Each generation of ancestors was thought to occupy one of these levels of heaven and to ascend progressively to higher realms until eventual dissolution.

The rites designed to promote the status of the deceased, known as *śrāddha*, continue to be celebrated in contemporary Hindu society even today. Since they are enormously complex, they cannot be fully explored within the context of this article.[15] However, a general description will indicate that the ancient Vedic pattern of reciprocal relationship between the living and the dead was not only preserved, but expanded and intensified.

The *śrāddha* rites indicate that an important function previously assigned to Yama has been assumed by surviving kin. No longer is Yama, given the responsibility of providing a newly arrived deceased with a new body; that task is now the responsibility of the family. Further, the deceased is no longer understood to make his way independently to the realm of the fathers by means of "heavenly wings".[16] Immediately after death, the deceased is completely disembodied and exists in a liminal status. His physical human body has been cremated, yet his spirit remains in the vicinity. In this condition, the deceased are known as *preta* (departed). In addition to propitiating previous generations of *pitaras* and aiding them in their journeys through the triple realm beyond, the primary function of the *śrāddha* rites is to transform the deceased from this liminal condition as a *preta* to the status of *pitṛ* (father). This is done symbolically, in the manner of sympathetic magic, by ritually fashioning a body out of rice balls (*piṇḍa*) during the first ten days after death.[17] During each of the first ten days after death, a new *piṇḍa* is created representing a vital part of the new body. On the eleventh day, after the rice-body (*piṇḍa-pitṛ*) is complete, a complex series of additional rites is held. Of chief importance among them is the feasting of the ancestral fathers and the newly deceased, all of which are symbolically represented by a group of eleven priestly specialists.[18] Through the first eleven days, the mood of *śrāddha* is generally one of mourning; but on the twelfth day, the concluding rite known as *sapiṇḍikārana* is held. This is the specific occasion during which the recently deceased symbolically joins his ancestors and becomes established as a *pitṛ*.[19] Without the performance of these rituals, the deceased remain as *pretas* and are regarded as a source of danger to the living.[20] But once established as a *pitṛ*, they gain new bodies and thus regain social status.

Just exactly when this distinction between *preta* and *pitṛ* emerged within Brāhmaṇical tradition is difficult to assert with any certainty. According to Hopkins,[21] the distinction is already assumed in epic literature. Keith believed that the distinction "can perhaps be traced right back to Sāṅkhayana",[22] a conjecture that would date the tradition as far back as the time of the *Kauṣitāki Brāhmaṇa*. Barua insists that even during the lifetime of the Buddha, the holy pilgrimage site of Gayā existed as an auspicious site for the performance of rites transforming *pretas* to *pitaras*.[23] Far more convincing is Knipe's analysis in which he concludes that the *śrāddha* feasts have their origins in the period of *brāhmaṇa* texts and were stead-fastly preserved in the *sūtras* and the *sāstras*.[24] These critical considerations suggest that the pattern of ritual activity designed to promote the deceased from the status of *preta* to *pitṛ* was prevalent before the emergence of specifically Buddhist conceptions.[25]

The *śrāddha* rites were/are a context for the expression of a number of social and religious beliefs relating to death. For surviving kin, these rites provide an acceptable social forum for the expression of grief, a means to grapple with the sense of loss which accompanies any encounter with death. Those closest in kin to the deceased are also supported emotionally by the presence of other family relations. In addition, because previously deceased ancestors are remembered and symbolically present during the ritual process, the *śrāddha* rites also constitute a type of family reunion for both the dead and the living. Consequently, the collective heritage of the family is recalled, and familial kinship lines are both publicly and privately affirmed.

More importantly, *śrāddha* constitutes the fulfilment of an obligation. By assuring the well-being of the deceased in the after-life, a debt of filial piety is settled. And if surviving family members hope to sustain a positive reciprocal relationship with the deceased in the future, and thus call upon his power as a *pitṛ* in times of need, they must first establish him in a venerable state. Providing for the ancestors by means of ritual service is a basic familial responsibility, a way of expressing thanks for their contributions to family life. A neglected ancestor, especially one that remains as a *preta*, can become a meddlesome nuisance or a source of serious family trouble.

For these reasons, *śrāddha* functions effectively as a ritual technique: it serves as a device which establishes the deceased in a state where the mutual interests of the living and the dead can be realized; and it provides a means for coping with death's existential sting and the period of social pollution which immediately follows death's occurrence.

To sum up, before the emergence of the Buddhist tradition, Brāhmaṇical conceptions of the after-life were somewhat paradisiac, providing that the ritual obligations incumbent upon the living were met. After the performance of ritual transactions designed to facilitate the deceased's transition from *preta* to *pitṛ*, the relationship between the living and the dead was conceived to be reciprocal in nature, an extended dimension of kinship relations.

Modifications of Brāhmaṇical beliefs in the Pāli canon

Although the *Petavatthu* contains a rich source of information reflecting early Buddhist understandings of the after-life, other portions of the Pāli canon generally considered antecedent to the *Petavatthu* contain a number of relevant passages to our discussion. From these passages, to be found in the *Vinaya* and the four principle *Nikāyas*, it is clear that important modifications of prevailing understandings had already taken place, while some conceptions had been completely abandoned.

One of the most conspicuous changes in the developing Buddhist cosmological view concerns the fact that the blissful abode of the fathers, or a path specifically followed by one's deceased ancestors, is nowhere to be found. What this seems to suggest is that, along with the decline in importance attached to the worship of *devas*, ancestor veneration suffered a similar dimunition. This does not necessarily imply that Buddhism rejected the importance of the family, although this accusation was often levelled against the tradition by Brāhmaṇical rivals.[26] There are numerous instances within the *Nikāyas* and the *Vinaya* where the Buddha enjoins his disciples to honor father and mother. Indeed, honoring one's parents and serving them was a cardinal teaching for the laity.[27] However, the absence of a corresponding conception parallelling the Brāhmaṇical *pitṛ* status, and the fact that no ritual device similar to *śrāddha* or *sapiṇḍīkarana* is mentioned in early Buddhist literature, indicates differing assumptions regarding the fate of the dead. Specifically, it means that the recently deceased do not *ipso facto* gain a bliss-filled and honored position in the after-life as a result of sacrificial ritual techniques or because of their status as family ancestors.

According to the Buddhist understanding, the destiny of the deceased is directly the consequence of how well he conducted himself morally during his human life span. While this idea of karmic retribution was certainly permeating Brāhmaṇical thought during this time, it never completely succeeded in supplanting the patterns of belief and rite that we have described earlier in this paper. Ancestor veneration, and attendant conceptions of the afterlife, existed side by side with the theory of karma. In early Buddhist literature, however, the karmic theory of moral retribution became the basic cornerstone for developing lore portraying life after death.

Unlike the fate of the *pitaras* and their after-worldly existence, the notion of *preta* was not abandoned by the Buddhists. It was, however, dramatically transformed in significance. *Petas* (Pāli for Sanskrit *preta*) were no longer considered to be potentially dangerous beings existing in a liminal phase of transition between the statuses of human being and *pitṛ*. According to the *Vinaya* and the *Nikāyas*, the term *peta* could still refer to a recently deceased,[28] but it might also refer to a being who had been deceased for quite a long period of time.[29] The realm in which *petas* dwell, *petaloka*, occupied a fixed position in the cosmos; and, whenever the different ṣtrata of conditioned *saṃsāric* existence are men-

tioned, it is identified as a realm existing immediately below the realm of human beings, yet still above the animal realm and the tortuous hells.[30] While the *Nikāyas* and the *Vinaya* do not specifically elaborate upon the conditions of *petas*, they do assume that they suffer from gruesome and lurid afflictions which make them less than human. The *Vinaya* even refers to *petas* as a way of defining that which is not human.[31] The fact that both *bhikkhu* and *bhikkhunni Vinayas* prescribe disciplined behavior in relation to *petas* indicates that it was commonly believed that *petas* could appear within the human realm.[32] Despite their gruesome condition, there is no evidence suggesting that *petas* were regarded as a dreaded source of mischief. On the other hand, their status is referred to as "untimely" because they merely realize the fruit of action and cannot initiate works on their own accord.[33] The *Mahāvastu*, while not a Pāli source, holds them in the same regard. It contains a vivid account of how *petas* as hungry ghosts, grieve over their powerless condition.[34]

Furthermore, the *peta* status did not amount to a destiny or transitional phase through which all recently deceased must pass. The *Anguttara Nikāya* states that only those who commit one of the "ten wrong ways of action" are destined for rebirth in *petaloka*.[35] The *Saṃyutta Nikāya* echoes the same generalization but states it positively: those who are virtuous in upholding the *pañcasīla*[36] (the five basic moral precepts) or "walk in faith"[37] will avoid *petaloka*. These passages consistently predicate existence as a *peta* upon the living of an irreligious life. There is, however, one reference in the *Anguttara Nikāya* which seems to preserve the Brāhmaṇical association of *pretas* with neglected familial obligations: those who live an immoral life by not honoring father and mother, such as recluses and brahmins, will be judged by Yama as "abusers" destined for *petaloka*, the animal realm, or *Niraya* hell.[38] Neglecting one's parents is considered pre-eminently "immoral". Thus, the Buddhist inclusion of this Brāhmaṇical motif is clothed within the context of an ethical injunction.

There are many passages in the *Nikāyas* expressing a low regard for ritual sacrifice, but only two that refer to *Brāhmaṇical* funeral practices and none that indicate a specifically Buddhist practice. The first reference to *Brāhmaṇical* practice occurs in the *Tevijja Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*[39] and scoffs at prayers to Indra, Soma, Varuṇa, Iṣana, Brahmā and Prajāpati to aid the deceased in becoming united with Brahman after death. Thus, this passage does not refer to the intentions of *śrāddha* and *sapiṇḍakārana*. But a second passage found in the *Saḷāyatana Book* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*[40] does. The son of a snake charmer and apparently a village headman asks the Buddha about the practices of brahmins who, when a man has died, "lift him up and carry him out, call on him by name, and speed him heavenwards". The Buddha's reply is in the form of questions directed at the headman and signals the Buddhist orthodox doctrinal attitude toward the central function of *sapiṇḍikārana*. In short, the Buddha asks if murderers, liars, backbiters, etc. will attain heaven even if a multitude sing his praises and say: "May this man, when body breaks up, after death be reborn in

the Happy Lot, in the Heaven World". The Buddha then compares such a practice to commanding a huge rock to float on water. Finally, he says that only those who abide by the basic moral precepts attain heaven. Ethical action has replaced ritual technique.

Briefly, Buddhist canonical literature antecedent to the *Petavatthu* reveals significant departures from prevailing Brāhmaṇical patterns of belief and rite. The most important change involves the dominating presence of the karmic theory of moral retribution in determining the nature of the after-life. The destiny of the deceased was not determined on the basis of ritual devices, nor by one's ancestral status. Rather, the nature of existence in after-life depended solely on the moral quality of human actions. While the status of *pitṛ* was abandoned, the status of *preta* was transformed. No longer considered as a liminal phase, it represented a suffering existence awaiting those who had acted immorally while among the living. Unlike the deceased ancestors of Brāhmaṇical tradition, these Buddhist dead are powerless. There is no reciprocal relationship between human and superhuman beings; and there is no textual evidence suggesting that the living perform any type of actions on behalf of the dead. This brings us to the significance of *Petavatthu* literature.

The significance of merit transference in Petavatthu literature

The *Petavatthu* (literally: "Stories of the Departed") is an anthology of short stories purportedly *Buddhavācana* ("sayings" ascribed to the Buddha). However, its content and style are decidedly at odds with the four principal *Nikāyas* and the *Vinaya*. As those texts bear the heavy stamp of scholastic formulation, *Petavatthu* literature belies a folkloristic origin. While it is impossible to reconstruct the reasons for its inclusion within the canon, it is not unreasonable to suppose that it was belatedly included because of its widespread popular appeal among the laity. The *Mahāvaṃsa* claims that Mahiṇda, Asoka's missionary son to Śri Lankā, recited the text as one of his first ploys to convert the island masses to Buddhism.[41] Henry Gehman, who first translated the anthology into English in 1938, believes that the stories were utilized by monks in preaching sermons to the laity. Overemphasizing, and reducing the importance of the text to a "mercenary motivation", he suggests that the exclusive purpose of the stories was to raise material support for the monastic community.[42] By that, he implies that the sole intent behind the giving of canonical status to the text was to cajole the laity into actively and lavishly patronizing the monastic community. There is no doubt that this motif is central to the text and we shall explore its significance more fully in subsequent pages. But the full meaning of the stories cannot be completely comprehended if we confine our analysis to a materialistic interpretation based upon an analysis of the patron/client relationship.

These stories may have been delivered as sermons by monks, but they reflect

basic religious assumptions intrinsic to the spiritual world view of the common folk. Consequently, fundamental Brāhmaṇical assumptions, abandoned or ignored in more scholastic texts, resurface in the *Petavatthu* clothed in new garb. Although veneration of the dead and grieving over their departure from life is firmly discouraged in at least six of the fifty-one tales,[43] the ancient Brāhmanical belief that the living in some way benefit the dead in their after-life existence persists. The new means by which this is accomplished is through the transfer of merit, a practice advocated in eighteen stories.[44]

The structure of the plot of the overwhelming majority of *Petavatthu* stories follows a fixed formula. A certain individual, almost always a lay person,[45] commits an immoral action out of selfishness, hatred, or delusion. When that individual dies, he or she is reborn in *petaloka*, suffering from a condition of woe physically mirroring the nature of the committed wrong.[46] The *peta* then appears to the living, sometimes to a surviving kinsman,[47] who recoils in disgust. The *peta* then proceeds to tell how his misconduct resulted in such a hideous condition of suffering. Either the story ends at this point, at it does in twenty-eight stories[48] with the lesson of karmic retribution vividly illustrated, or it continues. If continued, the *peta* makes a request: the living should offer a gift to the *bhikkhusaṅgha* and transfer the merit derived from that virtuous action to the suffering *peta*. Once the gift is made, the *peta* is greatly relieved of physical torment and very often transformed into the status of a *deva*.[49] The brief tale that follows is highly illustrative of the style and content of most of the stories. It contains the basic patterns of belief and practice which make *Petavatthu* literature distinctive and relevant to the purpose of this discussion.

The story of Nandā

While the Teacher was living at Jetavana, he told this story:

In a certain village not far from Sāvatthī there was a certain disciple believing and pious. His wife, Nandā by name, however, was unbelieving, irreligious, avaricious, quick-tempered, rough in her speech, and disrespectful and disobedient to her husband; she would rail like a drum and indulge in abuse. Dying and reborn as a petī, she sojourned near that same village. Then one day she appeared before the lay disciple Nandasena, as he was coming out of the village. When he saw her, he addressed her with this stanza:

1. "Dark and ugly appearance you are; your body is rough and you are horrible to behold. You are red-eyed; you have yellow teeth. I deem that you are not human".

The Petī:

2. "I am Nandā, Nandasena; formerly I was your wife. For having been abusive, I went hence to the peta-world".

Nandasena:

3. "Now what wicked deed was committed by body, speech, or mind? In consequence of what act have you gone from here to the peta-world"?

The Petī:

4. "I was wrathful and rough in speech, and I also showed no reverence to you. Therefore, for using abusive language, I went from here to the peta-world".

Nandasena:

5. "Come, I give you a cloak; put on this garment. When you have put it on, come, I will lead you home.
6. Clothes and food and drink you shall obtain, if you come home. You will behold your sons, and you shall see your daughter a villain".

The Petī:

7. "What is given by your hand into mine does not profit me. But as regards the monks, who are abounding in the moral precepts, free from passion, and learned,
8. Regale them with food and drink and transfer to me the benefit of the gift. Then I shall be happy, blest in the fulfilment of all desires".
9. Then promising with the words, "Very well", he made abundant gifts: food, drink, solid food, clothes, dwelling, umbrellas, perfumes, wreathes, and various kinds of sandals. After he had refreshed with food and drink the monks who were abounding in the moral precepts, free from passion, and learned, he transferred to her the virtue of the gift.
10. Immediately thereafter, when credit for this was transferred to her, the result came to pass. Of the gift, this was the fruit: food, clothes, and drink.
11. Then pure, having clean clothes, wearing the finest Benares cloth, bedecked with various garments and ornaments, she approached her husband.

Nandasena:

12. "O devī, you are of excellent appearance, you are illuminating all the regions like the morning star.
13. Because of what do you have such an appearance? On account of what is happiness your portion here, and why fall to your lot whatever pleasures are dear to the heart?
14. I ask you, devī, very powerful one, you who have become human, what good deed have you done? Why have you such radiant majesty, and why does your splendour illuminate all the regions"?

The petī:

15. "I am Nandā, Nandasena; formerly I was your wife. For having committed an evil deed, I went from here to the peta-world. Through the gift given by you, I rejoice, being free from fear from any quarter.
16. May you live long, householder, with all your kinsmen; may you attain the abode free from sorrow and passion, the dwelling of those who have willpower.
17. Here living the religious life and giving gifts, householder, may you remove the stain of selfishness together with its roots and enter heaven blameless".[50]

The central teaching of *Petavatthu* literature is the efficacy of karmic actions. Consistent with this bedrock assumption, Nandā suffers as a *petī* for her misguided human actions. The major doctrinal dilemma herein concerns the problem of how to integrate the theory of karma with what, at first sight, appears to be undoctrinal behavior, e.g., performing actions on behalf of the dead which promote their status in the after-life.[51] Maurice Winternitz referred to this practice as a serious blemish on the theory of karmic determinism.[52] In the following pages of analysis, we shall first identify Brāhmaṇical patterns present in this story, discuss the theoretical rationale for their inclusion (especially the practice of merit transfer), and determine the sociological implications for their accomodation. Finally, we shall conclude with some general remarks concerning how this Buddhist transformation of Brāhmaṇical patterns of belief and rite relating to the dead reflects an increasing valorization of the human condition.

Nandā's request that her husband perform actions on her behalf is sharply reminiscent of *śrāddha* and *sapiṇḍīkarana* ritual intentions. The status that her husband wins for her, *devī*, is much akin to the heavenly career of a *pitṛ*. Transfigured from the status of *petī*, she not only enjoys the satisfying worldly amenities of food and drink, but she also gains a new lustrous body. In addition, Nandā expresses her wish that her surviving family will be long-lived, a motif that we first identified as a concern of the *pitaras* (fathers) for the family. Thus, three fundamental patterns of Brāhmaṇical origin are present: the deceased is transformed from the status of *preta* to heavenly existence and given a new body, a potent and vicarious action on the deceased's behalf facilitates such a transfiguration, and concern for the continuation of family lineage is expressed. If our analysis ended at this juncture of the discussion, we might conclude that the *Petavatthu* simply offers old wine in new bottles. But this is not entirely the case.

The *Petavatthu* stories are saturated with illustrations of karmic retribution. It is, as we have indicated, the fundamental teaching of the anthology. The initial episodes of Nandā's story are but a series of images reflecting an orthodox doctrinal understanding of the karmic process at work. In the opening scene, Nandā's spiritual demeanor is compared to that of her believing and pious husband. It is clear that it is her disposition, the qualitative state of her mind as

conditioned by the *āsavas* (*rāga*, *dosa*, and *moha*: passion, hatred, and delusion), which generate her abusive actions. And when she appears to Nandasena, he immediately asks: "Now, what wicked deed was committed by body, speech, or mind"? This three-fold formula is consistently used throughout the *Vinaya* and the *Nikāyas* to designate the means by which behavioral expressions mirror mental disposition.[53] In an often cited passage of the *Anguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha says: "O bhikkhus, it is volition that I call karma. Having willed, one acts through body, speech, and mind".[54] In the case of Nandā, it is clear that she either does not have the discipline to control the *āsavas* by means of mental discrimination (*viññāna*),[55] or if she does, she refuses to exercise her will to act right. The abstract principles expressed in this example constitute the Theravāda understanding of karma: a mentally unhealthy disposition causally produces immoral actions which in turn produce a perpetuation of suffering. In other words: psychological conditioning of the mind leads to behavioral expressions in the social context which have future cosmic soteriological consequences. One's future status in the after-life according to this perspective, is wholly determined by one's ability to will into action a morally wholesome demeanor. It is precisely this ethic, so heavily emphasized in the Pāli canon, that has led many Western observers to typologize Theravāda Buddhism as a religion of "self-effort", rather than as a "religion of grace".[56]

Now the question arises: how can the strict determinism of karmic retribution reconcile the merit transferring activities that Nandasena performs on behalf of his wife? Or on what theoretical bases can Buddhism legitimate its incorporation of this originally Brāhmaṇical pattern of belief?

A traditionally Buddhist explanation has been given by Malalasekera.[57] In explaining how *parivaṭṭa* (transferring merit) is consistent with the Buddhist theory of karma, he focuses his discussion upon the mental dispositions of both the doer of the deed (in our example, Nandasena) and the beneficiary (Nandā). With reference to the doer, he says: "The act of sharing one's good fortune is a deed of compassion and friendliness and, as such, very praiseworthy and meritorious".[58] In other words, the act of giving (*dāna*), is ethically productive because it is rooted in a selfless disposition of compassion directed toward the assuaging of another's suffering. With reference to the beneficiary, he says: "the recipient of the transfer becomes a participant of the original deed by associating himself with it. Thus the identification of himself with both the deed and the doer can sometimes result in the beneficiary getting even greater merit than the original doer, either because his elation is greater or because his appreciation of the value of deed is more intellectual, and therefore more meritorious".[59] Re-emphasizing the importance of the mind's condition, he goes on to say that "what is significant is that in order to share in the good deed done by another, there must be approval of it and joy in the beneficiary's heart ... Here, too, as in all actions, it is the thought which according to Buddhism, really matters".[60] Malalasekera's theoretical explanation thus renders the story of Nandā and her transformation doctrinally acceptable. According to this perspective, Nandā's transformation from *petī* to *devī* results from her

husband's compassionate act of selfless giving and her own ability to intellectually appreciate, and therefore *rejoice* in the virtue of a meritorious deed.

This rationale for merit transfer, based upon the theory of karma, begs a comparison with the Brāhmaṇical rationale. First, it is clear that like their Brāhmaṇical counterparts, Buddhist *petas* remain dependent upon the living to perform catalytic actions on their behalf. However the Buddhist transformation of *petas* involves a transformation of mind, and not just body. The shining luminescence of the *devī* status is but a cosmological reflection of Nandā's newly found spiritually healthy mind. Second, as Knipe notes with reference to the Brāhmaṇical *sapiṇḍīkarana* transaction, the transformation of *pretas* to *pitaras* involved the liturgical application of an ancient cosmogonic model to an individual's postcremation passage. With such an "understanding of the passage of the deceased as a cosmogonic progression, ... an individual's salvation [was] dependent on the correct ritual activity of his descendants".[61] In comparison, the Buddhist incorporation of this deep-seated Brāhmaṇical belief is justified on a psychological and ethical basis, rather than upon the magical efficacy of ritual actions.

It needs to be noted, however, that the psychological and (therefore) ethical explanation by Malalasekera is something of an *ad hoc* rationalization legitimating actions performed on behalf of the dead on karmalogical grounds. Gombrich has examined the issue thoroughly by focussing upon the changed meaning of the term *anumodana*, the word used by Malalasekera to connote "rejoicing".[62] On the basis of his philological study, he has determined that *anumodana* originally conveyed a meaning of thanksgiving, or gratitude, that existed between the doer of an action and its beneficiary.[63] Only when merit transfer required doctrinal justification did its meaning shift from "gratitude" to "joy" or "empathy in joy".[64] Gombrich suggests that this shift in meaning probably occurred around two thousand years ago,[65] or about the time of the *Petavatthu's* collation. Thus, the substance of Malalasekera's argument is by no means new. Indeed, the theoretical framework of the *Petavatthu* has implicitly incorporated it. Moreover, in almost all of the *Petavatthu* stories, the protagonists (those who have committed irreligious acts) hardly inspire a spirit of gratitude or thanksgiving amongst their surviving kin. Rather, the most obvious motivations for survivors to perform merit transfer on behalf of the dead are compassion and selfless giving, motivations which agree much more easily with the karmic theory of action.

Yet, as Gombrich further has pointed out, there is one passage in what could be one of the most ancient strands of *Petavatthu* literature that gives, as a rationale for merit transfer, the motive of gratitude or thanksgiving. The passage is also found in the *Tirokuḍḍa Sutta* of the *Khuddakapāṭha* and constitutes the Buddha's explanation to King Bimbisāra of the plight of the *petas*. Here we find the stanza:

> He gave to me, he worked for me,
> He was my kin, my friend, my intimate,
> Give gifts, then, for the departed ones,
> Recalling what they used to do.[66]

In this passage, which on the whole constitutes a theoretical anomaly in the *Petavatthu*, we find the same motive for merit transfer amongst Buddhists as we did for *Śrāddha* amongst Brāhmaṇical counterparts. Just as Brāhmaṇical family survivors fulfilled their dharmic obligations out of gratitude for the deceased family member, so are Buddhists here enjoined to do the same. Gombrich's analysis has succeeded in identifying the cultural and social roots of Buddhist merit transfer in Brāhmaṇical tradition. The stories of the *Petavatthu*, therefore, for the most part, provide a new Buddhist theoretical basis for the continuation of this popular act of piety.

There remains, however, one other doctrinal consideration which Malalasekera and Gombrich have not examined in any great depth. This concerns the role of *bhikkhus* in the merit transfer transaction within the context of the *Petavatthu's* karmalogical rationale. *Bhikkhus* are considered the virtuous objects of such actions and their presence makes possible the fortunate consequences that result for the deceased. Within this karmalogical understanding, the qualitative condition of the object is just as important as the mental condition of the subject if the action is to bear genuinely auspicious fruit.[67] In this connection, we can understand the importance of the collective ritual life of the monastic community. It constitutes, primarily, an aggregate expression of the *bhikkhus*' continuously "pure" moral status.[68] In other words, it legitimates *bhikkhus* as being worthy objects of meritorious actions. It makes them an indispensable part of merit transfer; for *petas*, because of their irreligious acts that result in lowly spiritual conditions, cannot fulfil this doctrinally needed function. That is why in our example of *Petavatthu* literature, virtuous *bhikkhus*, rather than the *peti* Nandā, must be the object of Nandasena's action. Moreover, explicit recognition of the *bhikkhus*' status is made when Nandā describes them as "abounding in moral precepts, free from passion, and learned". Nanda's three-fold description is but another way of identifying the religious life of the *bhikkhus* with the three-fold basis of the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path: *sīla* ("abounding in moral precepts"), *samādhi* ("free from passion") and *paññā* ("learned"). What this again illustrates is the karmalogical rationale for merit transfer replacing Brāhmaṇical faith in ritual techniques. And within the context of this rationale, the act of merit transfer constitutes a cultic celebration of that which symbolizes the Buddha's Dhamma: the presence of *bhikkhus*. Hence, the spiritual values intrinsic to the Buddha's Dhamma replace those cultically expressed within the *śrāddha* rites (filial piety as a dharmic obligation). Consequently, the *bhikkhusaṅgha* replaces the "extended" Brāhmaṇical family as the primary socio-religious unit of importance in conjunction with patterns of belief and rite related to the deceased.[69] This brings us to our final consideration.

Socio-religious implications of the Petavatthu rationale

Within the scope of the *Petavatthu*'s teachings, *bhikkhus* not only replace the Brāhmaṇical family as the primary socio-religious unit, but they also replace the

deceased as cultic objects of veneration. We have already noted that in early Buddhism, there existed no reciprocal relationship between the living and the dead. However, like the Brāhmaṇical priest of the *śrāddha* rites performed on the eleventh day of ritual observance, *bhikkhus* continue the tradition of symbolizing the presence of the dead as well.

As we noted in our brief scenario of the *śrāddha* transaction, the fashioning of *piṇḍas* (rice balls) plays a key role: they are a symbol of the newly created body for the deceased and also constitute food offerings to the dead in order to allay hunger and thirst.[70] The practice of giving alms in the Buddhist context (the virtuous action performed by Nandasena in our example) is known within Buddhist circles as *piṇḍapāta* ("the casting of pinda"). Thus, *piṇḍas* are the alms which literally provide sustenance for the *bhikkhus*. Like the libations of the ancient ritual sacrifice that sustained *pitaras*, and like the *piṇḍas* of *śrāddha*, this giving of alms represents one side of an important reciprocal relationship. But here, the reciprocal relationship is strictly between the living.

Motifs associating the dead with *bhikkhus* are not entirely lacking in Buddhist tradition. In addition to the practice of *piṇḍapāta, bhikkhus* are often referred to as those who have "gone forth" (*pabbajā*—the term signaling the rite of renouncing society and gaining a new rebirth within the sacred world of Buddhist monasticism). As many scholars have indicated, this renunciation theoretically renders the initiate as "dead to the world", separated from the world of the laity.[71] And further, because *bhikkhus* are living the paradigmatic existence laid down by the Tathāgata (the one who has "gone forth"—the Buddha), they symbolize the urge to overcome rebirth, to go beyond (*pāraṇgata*).[72]

If we can speak of a relationship between the living and the "dead" in early Buddhism, it is the reciprocal relationship existing between the laity and *bhikkhus*. As *pitaras* were a source of power to be tapped by the Brāhmaṇical living, so are *bhikkhus* in the Buddhist context. Throughout the *Petavatthu* and other early Buddhist literature, the Buddha and his followers (the *bhikkhusaṅgha*) are consistently identified as the most auspicious fields for the making of merit. Whenever actions are performed which take either Buddha or Saṅgha as their object, powerful karmic consequences, such as the transfiguration of *petas*, result. Thus in return for *piṇḍapāta*; *bhikkhus* become a source of transformative spiritual power for the laity.

Within the practice of *piṇḍapāta*, those sacrificial offerings formerly given to ancestors through Brāhmaṇical priests are now given to the *bhikkhusaṅgha*. The *Petavatthu* pedagocially supports this tradition but justifies it on the basis of the spiritual virtues associated with the path that *bhikkhus* symbolize. That is, gifts given to the *bhikkhus* have a different motivational basis than in the Brāhmaṇical context (they are not given because the *bhikkhu* is a priest who possesses special knowledge necessary to make ritual observance efficacious). It is impossible to assess whether or not the *Petavatthu* compilers included various stories within the collection on the basis of whether or not alms to *bhikkhus* were advocated. Only twenty-four out of the 51 explicitly promote the practice.[73]

However, wherever the idea of merit-transfer is inculcated, gifts to the *bhikkhus* are required without exception. How do we evaluate this pattern? Is it the consequence of the need to make merit-transfer karmalogically consistent (*bhikkhus* are needed as virtuous objects to make the action productive)? Or, as Gehman asserts, were the stories of *Petavatthu* canonized because they are aimed at exacting alms from the laity by means of threatening them with the possibility of becoming *petas*? To agree completely with Gehman is to strip the text of any spiritual significance and to blandly ignore the nature of the transactions we have tried to describe. While there are, no doubt, unscrupulous clerics present in all ages and places, we would do much better by seeing the practice of *piṇḍapāta* as maintaining two ancient Indian practices rooted in Brāhmaṇical tradition. The first is obvious: holy men in India have been supported from time immemorial through the giving of alms by the laity. The second is that, within the Buddhist context, the entity sustained by these practices is the *bhikkhusaṅgha*. That is, as the *śrāddha* rites and *sapiṇḍikarana* sustain the "extended" Brāhmaṇical family in this world and the next, so does the analogous Buddhist practice sustain the *Sangha*, which constitutes the primary sociological unit within the Buddhist purview. Giving alms to *bhikkhus*, then, is at once the continuation of a general tradition and the consequence of substituting one socio-religious entity for another in a newly emerging religious communal structure. How calculated this substitution was, in fact remains a moot question. That it could be doctrinally legitimated is evident from our discussion.

Summarizing our argument, we may say that Buddhist transformations of Brāhmaṇical patterns of belief and rite pertaining to death and the after-life indicate an increasing importance attached to this-worldly activity. Life beyond death was determined by the quality of moral actions performed before death. Various cosmological realms were envisaged as reflecting the mental conditions of the living. The dead assumed their after-life status on the basis of their mental dispositions as humans rather than upon their status as ancestors. Further, the dead were stripped of their power to act efficaciously in the human realm and became totally dependent upon actions performed on their behalf by the living. Consequently, the relationship between the living and the dead ceased to be symbiotic and became unilateral. While assisting the dead in the after-life constitutes a continuation of Brāhmaṇical belief, the Buddhists fashioned their own theoretical justification based upon the ideas of karmic retribution. Here, merit transfer became a virtuous action because both doer and beneficiary could recognize and rejoice in the intrinsic goodness of the act. And rather than constituting an act of ancestor veneration, merit transfer, an action involving support for the *bhikkhusaṅgha*, constituted a cultic veneration of the Buddha's Dhamma, which was symbolized by the presence of virtuous *bhikkhus*. As such, the *Saṅgha* replaced the ancestors and the Brāhmaṇical family as the primary social unit of importance in connection with actions performed on behalf of the dead. Each of these transformations reflect either an ethicization of this-worldly action or an increasing importance attached to the efficacy of human life.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this discussion in no way exhausts the significance of merit transfer or ancestor worship in Indian religious traditions. In Buddhist tradition, the idea of merit transfer was largely expanded in the various Mahāyana schools. It became the means by which *bodhisattvas* such as Kṣitigarbha and Amitābha were thought to rescue suffering sentient beings from the rounds of *saṃsāric* rebirth. In the Burmese, Sinhalese and Thai Theravāda traditions, merit transfer continued to play a role in funeral rites and memorial services for the dead.

The patterns of relationship between the living and the dead which we have discussed in this paper also underwent further transformations within the burgeoning classical Hindu tradition. In the *Purāṇas*,[74] the meaning of the *śrāddha* rites was brought within the karmic framework of the *saṃsāra/mokṣa* (rebirth/release) soteriological formula. Undertaking pilgrimage to Gayā became a ritually meritorious action believed to assure the attainment of *mokṣa* for departed kin as well as for the pilgrim-participant.[75] Because the Buddha, understood within this context to be an incarnation of Viṣnu, and Bodh Gayā, understood to be an auspicious site of sacred power, figure heavily in this Hindu pilgrimage process, Buddhist patterns of belief and action were in turn modified and reincorporated within the ever-absorbing Hindu religious tradition. These developments await further study.

Furthermore, the Buddhist transformation with which we have been concerned must be seen as only a portion of a general process at work during the historical epoch when the *Petavatthu* was collated. While Buddhism may have originated as primarily a cloistered community of ascetic mendicants, by the time of the Emperor Aṣoka, it had become a religion of mass appeal: that is, it had begun to develop an appealing lay ethos of its own. Consequently, it appropriated, in addition to motifs associated with ancestor veneration, such practices as *paritta* (reciting scriptural passages as a means of generating magical protection), offering prayers to the Buddha (in hopes of enlisting his powerful assistance), and reciting the Buddha's name (as another means of gaining protection). Like merit transfer, these practices can be strictly understood as "undoctrinal", for they have no canonical basis. It must be remembered, however, that the canon was always the basis for monastic religious life and as such is the product of the monastic mindset. Even the goal of heaven, which became the goal of the laity and the believed destiny of transformed *petas*, was never the advocated goal of the monastic path. It was regarded as only another state of transitory existence that must ultimately be transcended. However, its promulgation amongst the laity by the monastic community, as evidenced by the *Petavatthu* collection, suggests that the monastic community eventually recognized the need for a broader soteriological appeal if the religion were to be sustained practically. To that end, scholastics may have doctrinally legitimated such behavior as merit transfer in order to further the needs of the religion, both materially and spiritually. In so doing, they paradoxically, on the level of doctrine, encouraged

the attainment of a conditioned *saṃsāric* existence (heaven) for an increasing number of their lay-constituency. The Buddhist transformation of patterns of belief and rite associated with the dead, then, was but part of this popularizing process. At the same time, it gave sanction to a religiously deep-seated and culturally ancient impulse to assist the dead in the after-life and also emphasized the re-emerging importance of the heavenly goal, i.e. a goal readily attainable by the living of a morally wholesome life. As such, it revalorized the importance of actions performed in the human realm, thus reasserting the soteriological significance of this-worldly existence.

Notes

1 *The Hymns of the Ṛg Veda*, 2nd ed., trans. Ralph T. H. Griffith, 2 vols. (Benares: E. J. Lazarus, 1897), 2:514.
2 *Ṛg Veda* 2:381–2. Here, the realm of the fathers is referred to as "deathless", and the sacrificer asks to be made immortal.
3 *Atharva-Veda Saṁhitā*, ed. Charles R. Lanman, trans. William D. Whitney, 2 vols., Harvard Oriental Series, Vols. VII–VIII (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1905), 1:206.
4 *Ṛg Veda* 2:399; X. 14, 7–8. David Knipe notes in his "*Sapiṇḍīkarana*: The Hindu Rite of Entry into Heaven", in Frank E. Reynolds and Earl H. Waugh, eds., *Religious Encounters with Death: Insights from the History and Anthropology of Religion* (University Park, Pa.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977): 113, that "sometimes it is Agni who is requested to supervise this union of the departed's new life with a new body. (10.16.5; 10.15.14)".
5 See, for instance, *The Collection of Middle Length Sayings (Majjhima Nikāya)*, trans. I. B. Horner, 3 vols., (London: Luzac and Company, 1959) 3:226.
6 A. B. Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and the Upanishads*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925; reprinted., Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1977) 2:408–9, says that the idea of judgement by Yama is found only later in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*.
7 That is, the *devas*, chief occupants of the heavens, beam their shining rays upon them.
8 Keith, *Religion of the Veda*; 2:407.
9 *Ibid.*
10 *Ibid.*, 2:405.
11 For ritual life in the cult of the dead in Vedic literature, see Keith, *ibid.*, 2:425–32.
12 *Ibid.*, 2:425–6.
13 For an elaboration and pertinent textual citations, see Knipe, "*Sapiṇḍīkarna*", p. 113; see also S. G. F. Brandon, *The Judgement of the Dead: The Idea of Life After Death in the Major Religions* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), pp. 168–71, and Frederick H. Holck, *Death and Eastern Thought: Understanding Death in Eastern Religions and Philosophies* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), pp. 41–48.
14 Knipe *Sapiṇḍīkarana*, pp. 117–20, notes that the three-fold heavenly hierarchy, according to *Satapaṭha Brāhmaṇa* 2.6.1. 1–3, was ranked in correspondence to the types of substances that ancestors offered as sacrificial offerings to the *devas* while among the living, and that this division of the fathers' world is prefigured in *Ṛg Veda* 10.15.1. Griffith, *Ṛg Veda* 2:400, n. 1., mistakenly attributes the hierarchy to "merit".
15 In addition to Knipe's *Sapiṇḍīkarana*, see Mrs. Sinclair Stevenson, *The Rites of the Twice-Born* (London: Oxford University Press, 1920 reprint ed. New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1971), pp. 156–92.

16 *Atharva-Veda* 1:206 (4.34.4.)
17 See Knipe for further details, *Sapiṇḍīkarana*, pp. 115–16.
18 Knipe notes that the number eleven indicates the identification of the *mahāpātra* priests, who symbolize the *preta* and his ancestors, with the eleven Rudras, symbols of the second of three classes of *pitaras*. See Knipe, *Sapiṇḍīkarana*, p. 117.
19 *Ibid.*, pp. 117–22.
20 Indeed, the entire period following death until *sapiṇḍīkarana* is one of extreme pollution. This could be the reason why the period during which *śrāddha* was observed was condensed from one year to twelve days (*ibid.*, pp. 116–17). The liminal status of the *preta* during this time recalls Mary Douglas's thesis that liminality connotes danger because an entity is between classification thereby defying ritual techniques to maintain order. See Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966). It also helps to explain why the *mahāpātras*, who symbolize the *preta* and his ancestors, are held in such low social esteem, by virtue of their association with death.
21 E. Washburn Hopkins, *Epic Mythology* (Strassburg: Verlag Von Karl F. Trübner, 1915; reprint ed., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1974), pp. 29–31. Hopkins notes that in the epics, the *pitaras* are worshipped not only by men, but by the *devas*. By now, *pretas* are being described as ghastly and tortured beings. Their association with pollution is also clear: until they are transformed into *pitaras*, they are treated "like outcastes". Unlike *pitaras* who are consistently identified with specific ancestors, *pretas*, again perhaps because of their liminality, are rarely identified with deceased individuals. When they appear in epic literature, it is usually as a host of troops in battle.
22 Keith, *Religion of the Veda*, 2:412–13, argues that the term *preta* is unknown in *Ṛg Veda* literature proper and its insertion as a liminal phase contradicts the *Ṛg Veda* understanding that the deceased immediately joins the *pitaras*. But Monier-Williams notes that *preta* is derived from *prē* (the prefix "pra" meaning "forth" and the root √i meaning "to go") and is found in its intensive form *preyate* in a hymn to the Goddess of Dawn, Uṣas, who makes the dark "depart" (*Ṛg Veda* 7.77). It is then used in the *Brāhmaṇas, Upaniṣads* and the *Laws of Manu* as "to die". The actual term *preta* seems to have been first used, according to Monier-Williams, in the *Śatapaṭha Brāhmana* before its widespread employment in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Gṛhya Sūtras*, see Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s.v. *preta*, p. 711. C. A. F. Rhys Davids erroneously speculated that the term *preta* was a corruption of *pitṛ, Indian Religion and its Survival* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1935), p. 35.
23 Barua's argument is somewhat strained. It is based upon the appearance of the term *aṣṭakā* (denoting memorial services for the dead held three or four times a year) in both the *Vinaya Mahāvagga* and the *Udāna* (references that I checked and was unable to locate and confirm). Barua claims that Buddhagoṣa and Dharmapala both misunderstood the technical sense of the term, and thus did not comprehend its meaning as referring to a ceremony in which oblations were offered to the dead. He says that Pāli references to *aṣṭakā* when correctly understood, are "historically important as proving beyond doubt that even during the life-time of the Buddha the annual bathing in the holy waters of Gayā tank and river was connected with the special funeral ceremonies called *aṣṭakās*, the last round of which comprised the eight days between Māgha and Phalguna. In other words, Gayā was, even at that early period of existence, a holy region for the performance of funeral obsequies and the offering of *piṇḍas*". Benimadhab Barua, *Gayā and Buddha Gayā*; 2 vols. (Varanasi: Bhartiya Publishing House, 1932), 1:244.
24 Knipe, *Sapiṇḍīkarana*, pp. 121–22.
25 Keith, *Religion of the Veda*, 2:414–15, speculates that the origins of *pretas*, and hence Buddhist Pāli *petas*, may be due to a transmutation of tree and water spirits. This guess is not entirely without justification; for in the *Petavatthu*, sometimes *petas* are

addressed as *yakkhas*; further, in modern *Śri Lankā, petas* are frequently and confusingly associated with the same. See Richard Gombrich, *Precept and Practice: Traditional Buddhism in the Rural Highlands of Ceylon* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 160–7.

26 See for instance, *The Book of Discipline (Vinayapiṭaka)*, ed. and trans. I. B. Horner, 5 vols., (London: Luzac and Company for the Pāli Text Society, 1938), 1:2.

27 See the "Sigālovāda Suttānta", *Dialogues of the Buddha* (*Dīgha Nikaya*), eds. and trans., T. W. and C. A. F. Rhys Davids, 3 vols. (London: Pāli Text Society, 1921), 3:180–81.

28 Horner, "Introduction", *Vinayapiṭaka*, 1:lvii–iii.

29 Louis de la Vallée Poussin puts their life span at 500 years, a day being equal to a human month. He bases this upon *Katthavatthu* 20.3, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "peta", Vol. IV, p. 134.

30 Above the human realm is *devaloka*, the highest of the five realms in conditioned existence. And above conditioned existence are *rupaloka* (the realms of form) and *arupaloka* (the realm beyond or without form). The five tiers of *kāmaloka* (conditioned existence) are referred to in *Majjhima Nikāya* 1:98 and 289, and in *The Book of Gradual Saying (Anguttara Nikāya)*, ed. and trans. E. M. Hare, 5 vols. (London: Luzac and Company for the Pāli Text Society, 1936), 5:266 and 377.

31 *Vinayapiṭaka* 1:202, 315, 332, 337; 2:201, 206, 360; 3:174, 196, 360, 364.

32 A *dukkaṭa* (wrong doing) offense occurs when one merely touches a *peta* (*Vinayapiṭaka* 1:41 and 3:16) or walks with a *peta, Vinayapiṭaka* 3:20). Incongruously, monks are forbidden to have sexual intercourse with *petas (Vinayapiṭaka* 1:57), play pranks on them (*Vinayapiṭaka* 1:132), or steal from them (*Vinayapiṭaka* 1:97).

33 *Anguttara Nikāya* 4:152.

34 *The Mahāvastu*, trans. J. J. Jones, 3 vols. (London: The Pāli Text Society, 1949) 1:22–24.

35 *Anguttara Nikāya* 4:169.

36 *The Book of Kindred Sayings (Saṃyutta Nikāya)*, ed. and trans. F. L. Woodward, 5 vols., (London: The Pāli Text Society, 1922), 2:46. *Pañcasīla* refers to abstaining from killing, lying, stealing, sexual impropriety, and the taking of intoxicants.

37 *Ibid.*, 179.

38 *Anguttara Nikāya* 1:121–25. Here, an "abuser" is questioned by Yama as to whether he is aware of the story of the "four signs" in which the Buddha identified continuing sickness, old age and death as the consequences of life lived without morality observed.

39 *Dīgha Nikāya* 1:309–10; the entire *sutta* is a critical Buddhist lampoon directed at various Brāhmaṇical practices including the performance of rites and the study of the three *Vedas*.

40 *Saṃyutta Nikāya* 4:218–220.

41 *The Mahāvaṃsa*, trans. Wilhelm Geiger (London: Luzac and Company for the Pāli Text Society, 1912), pp. 95–96.

42 Henry Gehman, "Introduction", *The Petavatthu*, in *Minor Anthologies of the Pāli Canon*, ed. I. B. Horner, Part IV (London: The Pāli Text Society, 1942), p. xi.

43 *Petavatthu*, pp. 6–7, 7–11, 14–16, 23–26, 38, and 38–41.

44 *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7, 7–11, 11–13, 16–18, 19–21, 27–29, 29–32, 32–35, 36–37, 41–43, 44–45, 54–56, 69–72, 77–78, 93–97, 98–99, 99–100, and 105–107.

45 In all but two stories (*ibid.*, pp. 3–4 and 4–5) where the protagonist is a *bhikkhu*.

46 For example, a laywoman in one story (*ibid.*, 11–13) conspires against another woman to make sure that she does not bear children. She is reborn in *petaloka* where every morning she gives birth to five children and every evening must devour them. In another story (pp. 4–5), a man consistently slandering others is reborn in *petaloka*

with a mouth full of worms. In yet another (pp. 29–32), a woman (Sariputta's mother), reviled *bhikkhus* saying, "Eat dung, drink urine, drink blood, eat the brain of your mother". The story continues: "Taken up at death by the power of *karma*, she was reborn as a peti who endured misery in conformity with her misbehavior". A lurid description follows.

47 The pattern here is that if the story is to include merit transfer, the *peta* almost always appears to surviving kin. If merit transfer is not included in the story, the *peta* usually appears to a *bhikkhu* who then purportedly tells the Buddha of his encounter with the *peta*.

48 All stories excepting those indicated in note 44 above, and five others (*ibid.*, pp. 7–11, 14–16, 23–26, 38–41, and 63–66), some of which are also found in the *Jātakas* and in the *Vimānavatthu*).

49 In Pāli literature, the *devas* are greatly reduced in importance in comparison to their Brāhmaṇical role. They must be reborn as human beings if they are to enter upon the *bhikkhu* path to *nibbāna*. The *deva* status is, therefore, not a final goal to be attained, but only the favorable result of virtuous deeds performed while living the lay religious life as a human.

50 *Ibid.*, pp. 36–37.

51 As we noted, the deceased as *petas* are in special need because of their suffering and powerless plight. There is no indication in Pāli literature of surviving kinsmen transferring merit to those assumed to have attained heavenly status. Further, those reborn in hell or the animal abode seem to be beyond help.

52 Maurice Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, 2 vols., (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1927; reprint ed., New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1977), 2:98–99.

53 In the *Petavatthu*, it surfaces no less than sixteen times (pp. 11–13, 13–14, 27–29, 32–35, 36–37, 41–43, 54–56, 58–63, 77–78, 79–80, 80–81, 81–83, 101–102, 103, 103–104, and 109–110).

54 *Anguttara Nikāya* 3:294.

55 For a discussion of the philosophical and soteriological importance attached to *viññāna*, see Donald Swearer, "Two types of saving knowledge in the Pāli suttas", *Philosophy East and West*, 22 (October, 1972): 355–71.

56 See for instance, Joachim Wach, *The Comparative Study of Religion*, ed. and trans. with an Introduction by Joseph M. Kitagawa (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), pp. 93–96, and S. G. F. Brandon, *Man and His Destiny in the Great Religions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1962).

57 G. P. Malalasekera, " 'Transference of Merit' in Ceylonese Buddhism", *Philosophy East and West*, 17 (January, 1967): 85–90.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 86.

59 *Ibid.*

60 *Ibid.*

61 Knipe, *Sapiṇḍikārana*, p. 121.

62 Malalasekera, "Transference of Merit", pp. 85–86.

63 Cited in Richard Gombrich's " 'Merit Transference' in Sinhalese Buddhism: A Case Study of the Interaction Between Doctrine and Behavior", *History of Religions*, 11 (November, 1971: 206–207. This article corresponds almost verbatim to pp. 227–41 of *Precept and Practice*.

64 *Ibid.*

65 Winternitz assigns the *Petavatthu* correctly to the latest strata of literature assembled in the canon, Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, 2:99. He notes that even Dharmapala, in his commentary, believed that there was a substantial interval between the text and the life of the Buddha, despite the fact that all but eleven of the

stories begin with the stock phrase, "When the teacher was dwelling at . . ., he told this story". In any case, the patterns with which we are dealing are, according to Gombrich, at least 2000 years old. Gombrich, "Merit Transference", p. 218.

66 "The story of the Petas Outside the Walls", *Petavatthu*, p. 11.

67 For a detailed analysis, see V. P. Varma, "The Origins and Sociology of the Early Buddhist Philosophy of Moral Determinism", *Philosophy East and West* 13 (April, 1963): 25–48.

68 In this connection, it is important to note that *pāṭimokkha* and *pavāraṇā* rituals, which express the collectively pure status of the *Saṅgha* in relation to the Vinaya rules, are held immediately before merit-making activities of the laity such as *uposatha* and *kaṭhina*. See my "Ritual Expression in the *Vinayapiṭaka*: A Prolegomenon", *History of Religions* 18 (August, 1978): 42–53.

69 In the soteriological sense, the *Saṅgha* might be regarded as the new "extended" family. I owe this suggestive insight to Professor John Strong, private communication.

70 Knipe, *Sapiṇḍīkarana*, p. 115.

71 S. J. Tambhiah, for instance, in his *Buddhism and Spirit Cults in North-East Thailand* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 65, writes "Buddhism is dramatically anti-brahmanical in enjoining contemplation of and contact with death as a major preoccupation of the monk. The accent is on visiting graveyards, confrontation with death and corpses, meditation on death to understand the transitoriness of life. The wearing of the *pamsakulina* rags gathered from graveyards is an extreme gesture of this absorption with death".

72 I. B. Horner, *Early Buddhist Theory of Man Perfected* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1936), pp. 282–312.

73 *Petavatthu*, pp. 1–3, 6–7, 7–11, 11–13, 16–18, 19–21, 27–29, 29–32, 32–35, 36–37, 41–43, 44–45, 54–56, 69–72, 75–76, 77–78, 84–93, 93, 93–97, 97, 98–99, 99–100, 105–107, 107 (the last two stories praising the virtue of giving gifts in general).

74 Cornelia Dimmitt and J. A. B. van Buitenen, Introduction to *Classical Indian Mythology* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977), pp. 10 and 248–49.

75 For detailed studies of this pilgrimage rite, see Barua, *Gayā and Buddha Gayā*, and L. P. Vidyarthi, *The Sacred Complex in Hindu Gayā*, 2nd ed. (Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1978), especially pp. 30–49 and 114–50.

10

PLAYING WITH FIRE

The *pratītyasamutpāda* from the perspective of Vedic thought

Joanna Jurewicz

Source: *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 26 (2000): 77–103.

The present paper is an attempt to look at the law of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) from the perspective of earlier Vedic thought, rather than that of the Buddhist texts and tradition. This perspective reveals several striking similarities between the Buddha's chain and the Vedic ideas of creation.

These similarities are reflected in the general structure of both processes and, in many instances, in particular notions denoting their stages. I am, nevertheless, well aware that in their specific contexts the Vedic creation and the Buddha's *pratītyasamutpāda* displayed a whole gamut of distinct meanings. I am also aware of the fundamental difference between these these two processes: the former (the process of the creation of the world) is regarded as desirable; the latter, which leads to suffering, is not.

In my analysis I shall work with the classical formulation of the *pratītyasamutpāda*, consisting of twelve links. I am aware of the existence of different formulations in the Pāli Canon,[1] but taking all of them into consideration goes beyond the scope of this paper and needs a closer collaboration between Vedic and Buddhist scholars.

I am going to show the most important Vedic equivalents of each link and the main lines along which the Buddha's reasoning may have gone. Since I am not a Buddhologist, I do not attempt to analyze here all the meanings which have been ascribed to these links in Buddhism; I restrict myself to their principal and most general meanings.

I would also like to stress that I am aware that the interpretation of the *pratītyasamutpāda* as a polemic against the Vedic cosmogony tackles only one aspect of this huge problem; as the Buddha said to Ānanda: "This conditioned origination is profound and it appears profound"[2] (*gambhīro cāyam ānanda paṭiccasamuppādo gambhīrāvabhāso ca*). The investigation of all the other questions connected with the understanding of the Buddha's chain remains within the scope of Buddhology.

Generalities

On the most general level, the Vedic cosmogony and the *pratītyasamutpāda* describe the creation of the conditions for subject-object cognition, the process of this cognition, and its nature, which, in both descriptions, is represented by the image of fire.[3]

Inspired by Prof. Richard Gombrich's investigation,[4] I am inclined to believe that this similarity is neither accidental, nor caused by the Buddha's inability to free himself from the mental paradigms of his culture. I would rather argue that he formulated the *pratītyasamutpāda* as a polemic against Vedic thought.[5] Through the identification of the creative process with the process that leads only to suffering, he rejected the Brāhmaṇic way of thinking in a truly spectacular way.

In Vedic cosmogony, the cognitive process is undertaken by the self-cognizing Absolute. The reflexive character of this process is expressed by the word *ātman*, which denotes both the Absolute itself, the conveyor of the cosmogonic process, and the forms assumed by the Absolute in this process: the world, the human being, the inner Self, and finally the fire altar, which expresses those manifestations on the ritual level. The negation of the *ātman*'s existence postulated in the Buddha's doctrine of *anattā* leads to the conclusion that the whole Vedic cosmogony is based on a false assumption and its acceptance inevitably leads only to suffering.

The character of the similarities between the Vedic creation and the *pratītyasamutpāda* enables us to propose a tentative reconstruction of the line of the Buddha's argument, which consisted in the redefinition of Brāhmaṇic notions and ideas.[6] Although the Buddha rejected the existence of the *ātman*, he did not reject the *ātman*'s transformations, but in formulating his *pratītyasamutpāda* he restricted their meaning so as to make them denote the process of human entanglement in empirical existence. This process is deprived of any absolute grounds that could serve as its justification, so the best thing that can be done is to stop it as soon as possible.

A general example could be provided by the famous declaration of the Buddha that in this "fathom-long body" (*vyāmamatte kaḷevare*) is the world, its origin, its cessation, and the path which leads to its cessation.[7] The Sanskrit term *vyāmamātra* appears in ŚB 1.2.5.14 denoting the measure of the altar. It has the shape of a man and is not only the counterpart of the sacrificer but also the manifested counterpart of the Creator (Prajāpati), and his body is understood as being identical with the cosmos within which all the cosmogonic changes take place. If we deny the existence of the Creator, these changes can occur only in a human being.

The Vedic cosmogonic descriptions begin already in the Ṛigveda, which constitutes the basis for later Brāhmaṇic philosophy. Both the fundamental model of creation and the characteristic way of describing it were formulated here. Creation is described in metaphors which have many semantic layers and allow for

simultaneous expression of all aspects of the creative process understood as the cognitive transformations of Agni, fire.[8] The famous Nāsadīya (RV 10.129) assembles the Ṛgvedic cosmogonic ideas into a general model and introduces a new kind of description which uses not only metaphors but also abstract terminology.[9]

The model of creation proposed by the Nāsadīya constitutes an important starting point for later philosophic speculations. The essentials of the process change neither in ŚB nor in the oldest Upaniṣads. The differences lie mainly its description. In early ŚB, the cognitive character of the cosmogony is expressed in metaphors, the metaphor of eating food and of the sexual act;[10] in later ŚB and the early Upaniṣads, descriptions using abstract terminology appear more and more frequently, although metaphors are also in use.

It goes beyond the scope of this paper to analyze all the reasons for this continuity in cosmogonic conceptions, but two of them seem to be evident. The first is the Vedic assumption about the basic character of the Ṛgveda: later literature constitutes its commentary, which has to explain the details of Ṛgvedic thought rather than to formulate new metaphysical postulates. The second is the possible repetition, under the guidance of a spiritual teacher, of the mystic experience of Ṛgvedic poets (*kaví ṛ́ṣī*), during which the riddle of the world's creation and existence was solved.

It is possible to find the references to various Vedic texts (RV, ŚB, BU, AU, TU and CU) in the *pratītyasamutpāda*. It seems that the Buddha chose those cosmogonic descriptions which met two conditions: first, they explicitly express the cosmogony as transformations of the *ātman*; second, they preserve their cognitive meaning, even if they are taken out of the Vedic context.[11]

At the same time, it seems that the Buddha (perhaps for polemical purposes) aimed greatly to simplify the Vedic ideas; the most important result of this is that he let go the cyclical character of the process: the *pratītyasamutpāda* is a simple, linear process.[12] And finally, in formulating the notions which denote the successive links of the chain, he used abstract terminology instead of metaphors (which he made much use of in his own explanations).[13]

We could say then, a bit paradoxically, that in this chain the Buddha extracted the essence of Vedic cosmogony and expressed it in explicit language.

1. *avidyā*

The actual term *avidyā* does not appear in Vedic cosmogony. But the ability to cognize appears in it. Firstly, the pre-creative state of reality is identified with the state of being unknowable: the Ṛgvedic *Nāsadīya* describes it as the state in which neither *sát* nor *ásat* exists. These notions have both ontological and epistemological meaning, so their negation means not only that neither being nor non-being exists in the pre-creative state but also that it is impossible to assert whether anything exists or does not exist. It is a state of total inexpressibility. Using the Buddha's term, one could call it pre-creative *avidyā*.

Continuing the description of the creation, the Nāsadīya describes the manifestation of the creative power of the Absolute, called *tád ékam*, and then describes the appearance of darkness hidden by itself (*táma āsīt támasā gūḷhám*). In the Ṛgveda, darkness symbolizes the states which are characteristic for night, when no activity physical or mental takes place; cognition begins with the *váreṇyaṃ bhárgas* of Savitṛ arousing thoughts (RV 3.62.10). The image of darkness which appears after the image of the creative manifestation should be interpreted as expressing the impossibility of cognition.

This inability to cognize is different from the pre-creative one. It is the state in which not every kind of cognition is impossible but only the subject-object one. The two spheres, the hiding and the hidden, mark the future subject-object division. But at this stage of creation both spheres are dark, so still identical, and cognition cannot be performed. Using the Buddha's term, one could call it creative *avidyā*.

The later cosmogonic texts usually do not describe the pre-creative state of unknowableness,[14] but very often depict the second, creative inability to cognize, understanding it as the impossibility of subject-object cognition exactly as inferred from the Nāsadīya description. The most explicit text is BU 1.4.: here the Creator (*ātman*) in the form of man (*puruṣavidha*) realizes his own singularity: he looks around and he does not see anything else but himself, which indicates not only that there existed nothing aside from himself, but also that he was not able to cognize anything other than himself.[15]

The idea of the inability to cognize, the result of the absence of anything other than the Creator, is also expressed in the suggestive metaphors of Agni the fire, who because of hunger attacks his Creator (ŚB 2.2.4.1–4), and of Death, identified with hunger, who looks for food (BU 1.2.1).

2. *saṃskāra*

When the Creator asserts the absence of anything other than himself and his inability to cognize, the wish or desire for the presence of "a second" appears in him. In BU 1.2.1 this wish is expressed in the formula *ātmanvī syām*, because "the second" is identical with the Creator; in other words, "the second" is his own *ātman*.[16]

This cosmogonic Creator's wish to create the *ātman* is sometimes expressed in ŚB by the subjunctive form of the verb *sam √kṛ* (with or without *abhi*). Here, Prajāpati wants to build himself (*ātmānam*) in the form of a fire altar, which is his body and the cosmos at the same time. He exudes from himself his eating (subjective) and eaten (objective) parts. Then, he devours food with his eating part. Thus, Prajāpati builds himself up (*ātmānam abhisaṃskaroti*), which is a natural consequence of eating.[17]

For instance, in ŚB 6.2.1 Prajāpati, wishing to find his son Agni hidden in the five sacrificial animals, says: "They are Agni. I want to make them myself" (ŚB 6.2.1.5: *ime vā agnir imān evātmānam* ***abhisaṃskaravai***).[18] He kills the animals,

cuts off their heads, puts them on (*upa √dhā*), and throws the torsos into the water. Then he looks for the torsos, calling them himself (*ātman*, ŚB 6.2.1.8: *yam imam ātmānam apsu prāpiplavaṃ tam anvicchāni*). He takes water and earth which was in the contact with the torsos of the animals and builds the bricks. Then he thinks: "If I create my true self in this way, I will become a mortal carcass, with the evil unremoved" (ŚB 6.2.1.9: *yadi vā idam ittham eva sadātmānam* ***abhisaṃskariṣye*** *martyaḥ kuṇapo 'napahatapāpmā bhaviṣyāmi*). He bakes the bricks in the fire and out of the torsos of the animals he builds the altar; the heads he puts under the altar. Thus he reunites the heads of the animals with the torsos in the fire altar which is himself, his own *ātman*, and becomes the fire (ŚB 6.2.1.12: *tato vai prajāpatir agnir abhavat*).

The creation of the second self described in the myth is the creation of the self in the process of eating. Agni's disappearance from Prajāpati's range of view corresponds to the images of the internal void felt by Prajāpati, attested in many places in ŚB, which should be identified with hunger.[19] Prajāpati's desire to find Agni is in fact the desire to eat him. ŚB 6.2.1.15 identifies five animal forms of Agni with food (*anna*).[20] The animals are prepared before eating: they are killed and their heads are separated from their torsos. The image of putting on (*upa √dhā*) the heads refers to the act of eating them, through which Prajāpati puts the heads inside himself. It is not necessary to cook them because they are of fiery nature: they have mouths identified in the Veda with fire.[21] The eating of the fiery heads allows Prajāpati himself to obtain the mouth enabling him to eat food. We may conclude that the image of the cooking of the torsos in the fire symbolizes not only the act of cooking food before it is eaten — lest it be eaten raw, which may cause death — but also the very act of eating food and digesting it in the internal fire of the Creator. Thus, Prajāpati, having eaten the fiery animals, becomes the fire; he confirms his identity with the fire and at the same time he regains himself in his *ātman*.

It is important to see the similarity between ŚB's description and the Upaniṣadic descriptions presented above: the image of Agni's disappearance, and so of his absence, corresponds to the image in which the *ātman* realizes his singularity, so the absence of any object and the impossibility of its cognition. So it appears that the beginnings of the cosmogony in the Veda could be described in the terms of the *pratītya-samutpāda: saṃskāra* arises from *avidyā*.[22]

3. *vijñāna*

The term *vijñāna* appears in TU 2 in a significant context. TU 2 describes five *ātmans* called "buckets" (*kośa*): one made of food and liquid (*annarasamaya*), one made of breath (*prāṇamaya*), one made of the mind (*manomaya*), one made of consciousness (*vijñānamaya*), and one made of bliss (*ānandamaya*). What the TU is here presenting is the liberating process during which a human being cognizes and realizes ever deeper layers of himself: all the *ātmans* have the form of man (*puruṣavidha*) — they have the head, the sides/wings, the feet/tail, and the

torso. This means that these *ātmans* are also the fire altar and the cosmos, exactly like Prajāpati's *ātman* in ŚB.[23] They also have the same form of man as the *ātman* (Creator) from BU 1.4.

If we reverse the process described in TU (which is justified on Vedic grounds),[24] we get the image of the creation of the successive *ātmans*, that is, of the successive forms of oneself having head, sides/wings, feet/tail, and torso.[25] Now the *ātman ānandamaya* symbolizes the pre-creative state,[26] the *ātman vijñānamaya* symbolizes the Creator's first manifestation, that of his consciousness;[27] the *ātman manomaya* is the appearance of thought and of desire for a second self; the appearance of the *ātman prāṇamaya* and *annarasamaya* is the creation of the second self which is alive and has a body thanks to eating and drinking.

The above description of the cosmogony generally agrees with the cosmogonic descriptions of ŚB, in which Prajāpati, having manifested himself (*ātman vijñānamaya*), wants to create his second self (*ātman manomaya*), and then transforms himself into the eater and the food. Vedic thought identifies the *prāṇa* with fire,[28] which is the eater, while *anna* and *rasa* obviously play the role of food.

BU 4.4.5 supports the cosmogonic interpretation of the reversed process described in TU 2. This lesson gives important evidence for the understanding of *vijñāna* in Buddhism as the transmigrating element, the analysis of which goes beyond the scope of this article. The term *vijñānamaya* appears here after the description of the dead and (at the same time) liberated *ātman* and is used exactly in the same order as in TU: the *ātman brahman* is made of consciousness, made of mind, made of breath, made of eye, made of ear, made of earth, made of water, made of space.[29] Finally, it appears that the *ātman* is made of the whole cosmos, so we should presume that BU 4.4.5 describes the return of the *ātman* to the world after his death/liberation and his repeated cosmogenesis, in which the *ātman brahman* mentioned in the beginning corresponds with the *ātman ānandamaya* in TU.[30]

Assuming that the *vijñāna* link corresponds to this stage of the Vedic cosmogony in which the Creator manifests his consciousness, it is important to notice that in the Brāhmaṇic ideas of creation the manifestation of the consciousness is cyclically repeated. The creation of the world is the process of the *ātman*'s realization of his inability to cognize, of his wish to cognize himself, and of his cognitive power. This power once again displays its inability to cognize, its wish to cognize, and its cognitive act, and so forth. In other words, the process is the constant manifestation of the *ātman* as the object of cognition, as the will to cognize the object, and as the subject performing the cognition.

We may then assume that the *avidyā* link refers to all the states of ignorance (objective states) which manifest themselves in the cosmogony. So the *saṃskāra* link refers to all the acts of the creative will to dispel ignorance, and the *vijñāna* link refers to all the subjective manifestations which realize this will. This means that the sequence *avidyā* — *saṃskāra* — *vijñāna* can be used to express the whole Vedic creation.[31]

The miserable situation of the *ātman* can be seen very clearly now: it not only does not exist, but, what is more, it cyclically repeats its false cognition and postulates its own existence. Put in the terms of the first three links of the *pratītyasamutpāda*, the Vedic cosmogony reveals its absurdity.

4. *nāmarūpa*[32]

In Vedic cosmogony, the act of giving a name and a form marks the final formation of the Creator's *ātman*. The idea probably goes back to the *jātakarman* ceremony, in the course of which the father accepted his son and gave him a name. By accepting the son, he confirmed his own identity with him, by giving him a name he took him out of the unnamed, unshaped chaos and finally created him.[33] The same process can be observed in creation: according to the famous passage from BU 1.4.7, the *ātman*, having given name and form to the created world, enters it "up to the nail tips".[34] Thus, being the subject (or we could say, being the *vijñāna*), he recognizes his own identity with the object and finally shapes it. At the same time and by this very act he continues the process of his own creation as the subject: within the cosmos, he equips himself with the cognitive instruments facilitating his further cognition.[35] As the father lives in his son, so the *ātman* undertakes cognition in his named and formed self.[36]

But self-expression through name and form does not merely enable the Creator to continue self-cognition. At the same time, he hides himself and — as if divided into the different names and forms — loses the ability to be seen as a whole.[37] Thus the act of giving name and form also makes cognition impossible, or at least difficult.

I think that this very fact could have been an important reason for the Buddha's choosing the term *nāmarūpa* to denote an organism in which *vijñāna* settles. If we reject the *ātman*, who, giving himself name and form, performs the cognitive process, the division of consciousness into name and form has only the negative value of an act which hinders cognition. As such, it fits very well into the *pratītyasamutpāda* understood as the chain of events which drive a human being into deeper and deeper ignorance about himself.[38]

5. *ṣaḍāyatana*, 6. *sparśa*, 7. *vedanā*

The cognitive character of the next three links of the *pratītya-samutpāda* (*ṣaḍāyatana, sparśa, vedanā*) is obvious,[39] but it is worth noticing that they also concur with the stages of the Vedic cosmogony.

The appearance of the subjective and objective powers during creation takes place in the act of the *ātman*'s division into name and form. It is also metaphorically described by BU 1.4.3: the *ātman*, led by the desire for its second self, becomes as great as a man and a woman embracing each other. Then it divides itself into husband (subject) and wife (object), who join together in the sexual act, which symbolizes the cognitive union of subject and object.[40]

From this perspective, it is also important that the term *āyatana* appears in the cosmogonic descriptions of AU. This Upaniṣad begins with a description of the *ātman*'s lonely existence before creation. It realizes its cosmogonic will and creates the worlds and their eight guardians (*lokapāla*), also called deities (*devatā*). These guardians are born in the process of heating the cosmic man, who is split into cognitive instruments which are the source of their cognitive power, and out of which their respective guardians are finally born. Thus, each *lokapāla* becomes the highest cognitive manifestation governing the respective cognitive power and instrument (e.g. the sun governs the eyesight and the eye).[41] But in order to exist they need an object: they are in danger of dying and they ask the *ātman*: "Find us a dwelling in which we can establish ourselves and eat food"[42] (AU 1.2.1: *āyatanaṃ naḥ prajānīthi yasmin pratiṣṭhitā annam adāma*). The *ātman* brings them a cow and a horse, but they are rejected by the guardians, who finally accept a man. So *ātman* tells them: "Enter, each into your respective abode"[43] (AU 1.2.3: *yathāyatanaṃ praviśata*). And the guardians enter the man in the inverse order of the creative process.[44]

Thus *āyatana* in AU is the abode of the highest subjective powers dwelling in the cosmos and in a human being (*puruṣa*), governing the cognitive powers and instruments. At the same time, each *āyatana* becomes the object of cognition of these cognitive powers and instruments (e.g. the eye cognizes the sun through eyesight). So their appearance in AU has the same meaning as the appearance of the six abodes in the *pratītyasamutpāda*: the manifestation of the subjective powers and their objects.[45]

As far as *vedanā* is concerned, the convergence of Vedic cosmogony and the Buddha's chain is not so clear, although one may indicate possible paths of exploration. The meaning of *vedanā* as the emotional reaction to contact directs us to BU 1.4.2–3, where the lack of "the second" means the lack of possibility of experiencing negative (fear) or positive (joy) feelings towards an object. The creation of "the second" will create the possibility of experiencing these feelings.

It is also worth noticing that the root √*vid* appears in the cosmogonic context at CU 8.12.4–5. This Upaniṣad describes the liberation of the *ātman* through the process of realization of the four states and then the cognitive return of the liberated *ātman* into the world, which means his repeated creation. Here the root √*vid* denotes the *ātman*'s consciousness of the will to perform subject-object cognition.[46]

If we posit that the Buddha referred to this image in formulating the *vedanā* link, it is important to notice the difference between the description of CU and the *pratitītyasamutpāda*: in CU the consciousness of the subject-object cognition precedes the act, whereas in the Buddha's chain, it comes after the act. On the other hand, we might argue that the next link in the *pratītyasamutpāda* is *tṛṣṇā*, which is the craving for continued subject-object acts, so it is possible to claim that here too *vedanā* precedes the successive subject-object acts.

8. *tṛṣṇā*, 9. *upādāna*

The process of Vedic cosmogony can be further expressed in the next two links of the *pratītyasamutpāda, tṛṣṇā* and *upādāna*.

After the final creation of the cosmos, human beings become the next manifestation of the Creator's subjective power. This is clearly seen in the Ṛgvedic Nāsadīya, according to which the Creator (*tád ékam*) manifests itself as the cosmos (*ābʹhū́*) and then divides into the subjective part, constituted by the poets (*kaváyas*), and the objective part, constituted by the world cognized by the poets. Next, Nāsadīya describes the poets' union with the world as they extend the ray (*raśmí*). This image (apart from its other meanings) symbolizes the act of releasing semen and the poets' sexual union with the world.[47] This in turn symbolizes the poets' cognitive act, as the very essence of their activity is the cognition and naming of reality. At the same time, the sexual character of the metaphor strengthens the similarity of the act it expresses to the act expressed by the links of *tṛṣṇā*: craving for another person constitutes the basis of sexual activity.[48]

It is important to notice here that the poets' activity realizes on the microcosmic scale the cosmogonic activity of the Absolute.[49] This fact sheds an interesting light on the division of the *pratītyasamutpāda* into two shorter chains, one of which begins with *avidyā* and the other with *tṛṣṇā*, as proposed in the commentary on the *Udānavarga*.[50] The Vedic material justifies the division of the *pratītyasamutpāda* in this way, which further supports the thesis that the Buddha was referring to Vedic data when he formulated his chain.[51]

The references are more distinct here than may at first appear. The Buddha in his descriptions of *tṛṣṇā* very often refers to the image of fire.[52] I think that the reason why he does so is not only because the metaphor of fire is particularly expressive, but also because something more lies behind it: here he is referring to the Vedic image of creation as performed by human subjects.

Now we have to go back to the Ṛgvedic image of the poets pervading the dark object with their ray. In other hymns of the Ṛigveda, the poets (called *kaví,ŕ̥ṣi* or fathers) are depicted as inflamed with internal heat (*tápas*) and they burn the rock, which symbolizes the object that they recognize. They are often identified with specific families of poets, especially with Aṅgirases — the sons of Agni.[53]

What is more, in the Ṛigveda forms of the root √*tṛṣ*, from which the noun *tṛṣṇā* is derived, denote the fire's activity.[54] It may be assumed that in formulating the *tṛṣṇā* link, the Buddha was also referring to the fiery activity of the poets burning the world in the cosmogonic act of cognition. In his chain, their activity is deprived of its positive dimension and is identified only with the negative aspect of fire, which in its insatiability digests, and thus destroys, itself and the world around it.

One more thing is important here. The state of primal creative ignorance is often expressed by the image of hunger, which in turn is identified with Agni.[55]

It appears then that the beginnings of creation were also understood in the Veda as the manifestation of fire, exactly like the poets' creative activity.[56] From the Vedic perspective, the *pratītyasamutpāda*'s division into two shorter chains, starting from *avidyā* and *tṛṣṇā*, is fully justified.

The identity of the poets' activity and the beginnings of creation results from the basic Vedic assumption that cosmogony is the manifestation of Agni, the fire, who, out of the darkness symbolizing the precreative state of ignorance, emerges in creative enkindling and generates the conditions of cognition: light which reveals shapes and speech that enables their naming and recognition.[57] When Agni the fire fully manifests his blazing *ātman* in the cosmos, creation is taken up by the burning poets. Through them Agni burns in the world he created. He burns voraciously and constantly needs fuel in order to exist. And this constant, voracious devouring of the fuel and its digesting are expressed by *upādāna*. The meaning of this word is both "fuel" and "grasping".[58] The first evokes the fire metaphor with its concrete meaning of burning fuel and eating food; the second is more abstract and refers to cognitive activity. So it encompasses the activity of Agni as described in the Veda.

10. *bhava*, 11. *jāti*, 12. *jarāmaraṇa*

The last three links of the *pratītyasamutpāda* evidently may refer to the activity of fire which may come into being, be born, and die because it burns the fuel. This is how the Buddha interpreted it.[59]

In the Vedic formulation, it is the constant cognitive craving of the fiery Absolute which guarantees the coming into existence (*bhava*) of the creation. This is also expressed by the Vedic metaphors for subject-object contact: the metaphor of sexual union and the metaphor of eating, actions which result in a new existence or assure the continuation of the existence achieved so far.[60]

Some similarities between the last three links of the *pratītyasamutpāda* and the Vedic cosmogony may also be seen in AU, where the *ātman*, having created the cosmos and man (*puruṣa*), opens the top of the head and is born in it, in order to recognize that it is he who is man and the cosmos (AU 1.3.12–13). Then AU describes three births of the *ātman* in human beings: inside a woman at the moment of conception, during the physical birth, and at death (AU 2). Thus, the *ātman* exists in the world before its birth and its death: its *bhava* precedes its *jāti* and *jarāmaraṇa*.

Describing the existence of the *ātman* in the form of an embryo inside the womb, AU several times uses the causative form of the verb √*bhū* in order to denote that his life is supported by his mother. It is not impossible that the term *bhava* in the Buddha's chain refers to this very image.[61] The possible references to this part of AU could be confirmed by another, later Buddhist interpretation of the *pratītyasamutpāda*, according to which these three last links describe the existence that follows the existence described in links 3–9 (*vijñāna* — *upādāna*).

In its description of the three births of the *ātman*, AU stresses the reflexive

character of this act, which is understood as the *ātman*'s self-transformations. The *ātman* existing in man as his semen is at the same time the father — the giver of semen, and the semen itself — the potential offspring. The *ātman*, fed by its pregnant mother, becomes identical with her, so it is its own mother. This reflexive character is also present in the description of the *ātman*'s dying.[62]

According to AU, the *ātman* is nourished by the pregnant woman in her womb: "For the continuance of these worlds, for it is in this way that these worlds continue"[63] (*eṣāṃ lokānāṃ saṃtatya evaṃ saṃtatā hīme lokāḥ*). This immediately makes one think of the idea of the *dharmasaṃtāna* which appears in the explanations of the *pratītyasamutpāda*.[64] The difference is crucial: in the Vedic cosmogony *lokānāṃ saṃtāna* is realized thanks to the self-transformations of the *ātman*; in the *pratītyasamutpāda*, the *ātman* does not exist; there are only changes.[65]

It is surely significant that the *locus classicus* for the exposition of the *pratītyasamutpāda* is called the Mahānidānasutta. The word *nidāna* appears in the cosmogonic context in RV 10.130.3: "What was the prototype, what was the counterpart and what was the connection between them?" (*kā́sīt pramā́ pratimā́ kíṃ nidā́nam*). In ŚB 11.1.6.3 *pratimā* is the cosmos identified with the fire altar, in ŚB 11.1.8.3 *pratimā* is sacrifice.[66] The *pramā* is Prajāpati, the Creator, the *nidāna*, the link between the Creator and the creation: their identity. Thus *pramā* and *pratimā* resolve themselves into *nidāna* which guarantees and expresses their identity.

Nidāna, denoting the ontological connection between different levels and forms of beings, also refers to the epistemology: it also gives the explanation of this connection.[67] I presume that this is the first meaning of *nidāna* in the title of the Buddha's sermon. It is really "a great explanation": there is no *ātman*, the *nidāna* of the cosmogony. The negation of the ontological *nidāna* constitutes the Buddha's *mahānidāna*.

I would like to propose a mental experiment here. The Buddha preached at least some of his sermons to educated people, well versed in Brāhmaṇic thought, who were familiar with the concepts and the general idea of the Vedic cosmogony. To them, all the terms used in the *pratītyasamutpāda* had a definite meaning and they evoked definite associations. Let us imagine the Buddha enumerating all the stages of the Vedic cosmogony only to conclude: "That's right, this is how the whole process develops. However, the only problem is that no one undergoes a transformation here!" From the didactic point of view, it was a brilliant strategy. The act of cutting off the *ātman* — or rather, given his fiery nature, the act of blowing him out — deprives all the hitherto well-defined concepts of their meanings and challenges the infallibility of all their associations, exposing the meaninglessness, absurdity even, of all the cosmogonic developments they express.

The similarities between the Vedic cosmogony and the *pratītyasamutpāda* which I have been trying to show are too evident to be pure coincidence. If we agree with the thesis that the Buddha in formulating the *pratītyasamutpāda* was

referring to Vedic cosmogony, his chain should be treated as the general model for Vedic cosmogony but negating its metaphysical, cognitive, and moral sense. To apply the doctrine of *anattā* here would be to deny the *ātman* as the metaphysical basis of all cosmogonic transformations as well as its final forms as they successively appear in the stages of the process. This deprives the Vedic cosmogony of its positive meaning as the successful activity of the Absolute and presents it as a chain of absurd, meaningless changes which could only result in the repeated death of anyone who would reproduce this cosmogonic process in ritual activity and everyday life.

And since fire is the intrinsic character of the *ātman, nirvāṇa* can mean not only the liberating recognition of the *ātman*'s absence, but also the refutation of the whole of Vedic metaphysics, which postulates that fire underlies, conditions, and manifests itself in the cosmogony.

Abbreviations

AB	Aitareya Upaniṣad
BU	Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad
CU	Chāndogya Upaniṣad
D	Dīgha Nikāya
KU	Kaṭha Upaniṣad
MāU	Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad
RV	Ṛgveda
S	Saṃyutta Nikāya
ŚB	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa
TU	Taittirīya Upaniṣad

Notes

1 See Mejor 1994, pp. 136–49.
2 D II 55, Gombrich's translation (in Gombrich 1996, p. 46).
3 See Reat 1990, p. 328.
4 Gombrich 1996; Gombrich 1992, pp. 159–78.
5 This may have been done not by the Buddha personally, but by the authors who composed the Pāli Canon. In such a case, they would be the ones who disputed with the Veda. Who disputed is less important here than the fact that there was such a dispute.
6 See Gombrich 1996, pp. 31*ff.*, 42; Gombrich 1992, pp. 162*ff.*
7 S I 62: *api khvāham āvuso imasmiññeva vyāmamatte kaḷevare saññimhi samanake lokaṃ ca paññāpemi lokasamudayaṃ ca lokanirodhaṃ ca lokanirodhagāminiṃ ca paṭipadan-ti.*
8 This is the main thesis of my book "Kosmogonia Rygwedy: Myśl i metafora" ("The Cosmogony of the Ṛgveda; Thought and Metaphor") forthcoming this year (2000).
9 See Jurewicz 1995a, pp. 141–51, Jurewicz 1995b, pp. 109–28.
10 See Jurewicz 1997, pp. 31–46.
11 See below on, *vijñāna, nāmarūpa*, the limitation of the number of the *āyatanas*.
12 The only exception is the possible repetition of *avidyā* in *tṛṣṇā*.
13 See first of all the concepts *tṛṣṇā* and *upādāna* instead of the image of Agni the fire.

14 Its description appears in the descriptions of liberation, see for example BU 4.3.23–32.
15 BU 1.4.1: *ātmaivedam agra āsīt puruṣavidhaḥ | so 'nuvīkya nānyad ātmano 'paśyat|*; see also AU 1.1: *ātmā vā idam eka evāgra āsīn nānyat kiṃcana miṣat|*. It seems justified to associate the idea of winking expressed by the root √*miṣ* with the idea of being alive and awake, which in its turn is associated with the possibility of cognition. It also seems probable that the idea of being a not-cognizing *ātman* may constitute one of the meanings of *avidyā*, which is the source of all the successive events inevitably leading to entanglement in the empiric world. This inevitability is also present in the Vedic cosmogony: once *ātman* manifested his inability to cognize, the rest of the creative process became a constant attempt to fill the epistemic and ontological gap which appeared in the perfect and full Absolute.
16 What follows is the description of the creation and formation of the *ātman*, which is, first of all, the cosmos (BU 1.2, BU 1.4, AU), but also the human being, and also the innermost self of the cosmos and the human being (AU). The fact that the presence of "the second" is the necessary condition for subject-object cognition is often stated in BU in its descriptions of liberation, e.g. 4.2.14, 4.3.23–32.
17 See ŚB 7.1.2, 10.4.2 and 6.2.1 analysed below.
18 Eggeling's translation (in Eggeling 1989, Vol. 3, p. 162).
19 E.g. 3.9.1.1, 10.4.2.2 where Prajāpati feels empty (*riricāna iva mene*), 7.1.2.1 where the food is flowing out from Prajāpati when he is relaxed.
20 In *Tāṇḍyamahābrāhmaṇa* 21.2.1 (in Lévi 1898, p. 25) the creatures run away from Prajāpati fearing that he will eat them.
21 See for example ŚB 7.1.2.4.
22 It is worth noticing that in the very image of hunger the ideas of *avidyā* and of *saṃskāra* are present: hunger is both the lack of food and the desire to have it.
23 This identification directs us to the five layers of the fire altar and to the sacrificer's journey along these layers up to heaven, which is performed during the sacrifice. The above description of TU would probably be the first description of liberating activity understood as the act of climbing up, not only within the cosmos, but also within one's own body up to the head (which is identified with heaven), since the successively realized *kośas* are inside the human being.
24 Also the description of the four stages of *ātman* (see CU 8.7–12) has this twofold meaning of the liberating and the creative process. In later thought (*smṛti*), the *pralaya*'s order clearly reverses the order of creation. It is also worth noting that there is a great similarity between the order in which the five *ātmans* are realized and the stages of yoga in its later formulation: *āsana* means bodily practice (corresponding to the *ātman annarasamaya*), *prāṇayama* is breath practice (*ātman prāṇāmaya*), *nirodha* is the cessation of mental perception (*ātman manomaya*) and of the *buddhi's* activity (*ātman vijñānamaya*) which culminates in the realization of the highest reality (*ātman ānandamaya*). The roots of classical yogic ideas seem to be here.
25 See ŚB 10.4.2.26, where Prajāpati, having created three worlds identified with the womb and with the *ukhā*, pours himself into them — made of metres, of hymns, of breaths, and of gods — identified with semen (*sa eṣu triṣu lokeṣūkhāyām | yonau reto bhūtam ātmānam asiñcac chandomayaṃ stomamayaṃ prāṇamayaṃ devatāmayam*). The three worlds which are the womb and the *ukhā*, should be identified with the eater (the *ukhā* as the belly, that is, something which eats, appears in ŚB 7.5.1.38; in BU 1.4.6 the womb and the mouth and the internal part of hands are identified as those parts of *ātman* which are hairless). The Prajāpati's *ātman* — made of metres, made of hymns, made of breaths, made of gods — is the eaten food. And this very act results in creating the new *ātman* of Prajāpati, which is expressed in forms of the root *sam* √*kṛ*: "In the course of a half-moon the first body (*ātman*) was made up, in a

further [half-moon] the next [body — *ātman*], in a further one the next — in a year he is made up whole and complete" (translation in Eggeling 1989, Vol. IV, p. 354, *tasyārdhamāse prathama ātmā samaskriyata davīyasi paro davīyasi paraḥ saṃvatsara eva sarvaḥ kṛtsnaḥ samaskriyata* |). The process of creating a new *ātman* for Prajāpati is identified with the building of the fire altar (ŚB 10.4.2.27); we may presume that his three *ātmans* enumerated above are the three *citis* of the altar corresponding to the earth, the *antarikṣa*, and the sky. One should remember, however, that in the fire altar we have five *citis* (there are two more: one between the *citi* corresponding to the earth and that to the *antarikṣa* and one between the *citi* corresponding to the *antarikṣa* and that to the sky).

26 This seems to contradict the claim made above that the pre-creative state is the state of unknowableness. There are, however, many descriptions in the Upaniṣads which identify this state with the state in which cognition is impossible (e.g. BU 4.3.23–32, 4.2.14). As explained there, the impossibility of cognition results from the Absolute's singularity. The idea of this singularity is also present in the notion of *ānanda*, which is also used to denote the bliss gained in the sexual act, during which the unity of the subject and the object is realized (as far as is possible), and this unity may be interpreted in Vedic thought as the state of singularity of the subject: according to BU 1.4.3, when the *ātman* wants to create his "second self" he splits himself into husband and wife and this division is the very creation of "the second".

27 *Vijñāna* is the highest cognitive power in the human being, e.g. BU 2.4.5: *ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyo maitreyi* | *ātmano vā are darśanena śravaṇena matyā vijñānenedaṃ sarvaṃ viditam*|.

28 See note 57.

29 *sa vā ayam ātmā brahma vijñānamayo manomayaḥ prāṇamayaś cakṣurmayaḥ śrotramayaḥ pṛthivīmaya āpomayo vāyumaya ākāśamayas tejomayo 'tejomayaḥ kāmamayo 'kāmamayaḥ krodhamayo 'krodhamayo dharmamayo 'dharmamayaḥ sarvamayaḥ* | *tad yad etad idaṃmayo 'domaya iti*|.

30 See also BU 4.4.22: *ātman vijñānamaya* in the space of the heart, being *sarvasya vaśī sarvasyeśānaḥ sarvasyādhipatiḥ*; a very similar (but later) description to the *suṣupti* state in MāU (5–6); *yatra supto . . . na kañcana svapnaṃ paśyati . . . eṣa sarveśvaraḥ* | *eṣa sarvajñaḥ* | *eṣo 'ntaryāmī* |, which makes a synthesis of TU's (*sarvajña*) and CU's (*svapnaṃ na paśyati*) descriptions of the third stage of the *ātman*. In BU 3.9.28.7 *brahman* is both *vijñāna* and *ānanda*.

It should be added that the cosmogonic scheme which agrees with the reversed process of TU is continued by the later descriptions (later Upaniṣads, *smṛti* and classical *sāṃkhya*), where the first manifestation of the Absolute (*smṛti*) and of the *prakṛti* (*sāṃkhya*) is the *buddhi*, identified with the *vijñāna*: in KU 1.3.9. There are other similarities between the *buddhi* and the *vijñāna*: the most important function of the *buddhi* are discernment and decision making (*adhyavasāya*); the idea of discernment is also present in the root *vi√jñā*. *Buddhi* (as the *vijñāna*) is also the highest human cognitive power.

31 See *nāmarūpa, ṣaḍāyatana, tṛṣṇā*. The mechanism is the same, although the Buddha in his description used different terms. If *avidyā* referred to the pre-creative state, it could have an ontological meaning (like the terms *asat* or *anṛta*), i.e. asserting the non-existence of any pre-creative reality.

32 The Vedic sources of this link are known to Buddhologists, see Frauwallner 1990, Vol. I, pp. 216*ff.*

33 In ŚB 6.1.3 Prajāpati gives names to Agni in order to make him *apahatapāpman*, "without evil"; *pāpman* is identified with death (*mṛtyu*, see for example ŚB 10.4.4.1, 11.1.6.8), and death symbolizes the pre-creative state.

34 This means that the *ātman* and the cosmos have the same *puruṣavidha* shape (*tad-*

dhedaṃ tarhy avyākṛtam āsīt | tan nāmarūpābhyām eva vyākriyata ... sa eṣa iha praviṣṭa ā nakhāgrebhyaḥ |). The idea of the *nārūpa* appears also in ŚB 6.1.3, ŚB 11.2.3, CU 6.1–4. The Creator enters the world after its division into name and form also in ŚB 6.1.3. In ŚB 11.2.3.1–6 and in CU 6.3.2–4 the entrance of the Creator into the world takes place at the very moment of its division into name and form.

35 According to the BU 1.4.7, the *ātman* takes up cognitive activity within the created cosmos, giving names to his cognitive powers: *prāṇann eva prāṇo nāma bhavati vadan vāk paśyaṃś cakṣuḥ śṛṇvañ śrotraṃ manvāno manaḥ | tāny asyaitāni karmanāmāny eva |*. In ŚB's metaphor of eating, the giving of name and form is the creation of food and its devouring, which results in creating the eater.

36 This whole idea can also be expressed in ŚB's metaphor of eating: the eater, having created his own body, enters it. On the one hand, it means that the eater eats the created body and thus makes it his own (confirms his own identity with it). On the other hand he lives in the new body acquired thanks to the act of eating it, see ŚB 6.2.1, quoted above.

37 This idea is present for example in ŚB 6.1.3, where the act of giving names to Agni and his assuming forms adequate to the names results in its being impossible to recognize Agni as a whole: only his different forms are visible (ŚB 6.1.3.19: *so 'yaṃ kumāro rūpāṇy anuprāviśan na vā agniṃ kumāram iva paśyanty etāny evāsya rūpāṇi paśyanty etāni hi rūpāṇy anuprāviśat |*). Similarly, in BU 1.4.7 the division of the *ātman* into name and form causes it to become imperceptible as a whole: *yathā kṣuraḥ kṣuradhāne 'vahitaḥ syād viśvaṃbharo vā viśvaṃbharakulāye | taṃ na paśyanti | akṛtsno'hi saḥ | ... sa yo 'ta ekaikam upāste na sa veda | akṛtsno hy eṣo 'ta ekaikena bhavati | ātmety evopāsīta | atra hy ete sarva ekaṃ bhavanti |*. It should be noted that in BU 1.4 the description of the creative division into name and form appears after the description of *ātman*'s division into male and female parts, so the order is different from that in the Buddha's chain, where *nāmarūpa* appears before *ṣaḍāyatana*. Likewise, ŚB's description of Agni, divided into name and form, appears before the whole story of creation which was interpreted as a description of the beginnings of creation. I would explain this as the Buddha's attempt to gather different Vedic descriptions in one general, simple scheme in which the cognitive character of the concepts is the most important. The main line of both schemes is the same: the creation of the subject is followed by the creation of the object no matter what it is called (the *ātman* who is as great as a man and a woman embracing each other or the *ātman* who is divided into names and forms).

38 The image of the Creator's manifestation in name and form is one of the most explicit Vedic images expressing the cognitive character of creation. This could also be an important reason for the Buddha's choosing the term *nāmarūpa*.

39 See Oldenberg 1994, pp. 222*ff.*, Frauwallner 1990, Vol. 1, pp. 218*ff.*

40 BU 1.4.3. *sa haitāvān āsa yathā strīpumāṃsau saṃpariṣvaktau | sa imam evātmānaṃ dvedhāpatayat | tataḥ patiś ca patnī cābhavatām | ... tāṃ samabhavat | tato manuṣyā ajāyanta |*. The fact that in the sexual union of the subject and the object the Creator unites with his female part is confirmed in ŚB 6.1.2.1: *so 'gninā pṛthivīṃ mithunaṃ samabhavat*, see also ŚB 6.1.2.2–9.

41 *mukha — vāc — agni, nāsike — prāṇa — vāyu, akṣiṇī — cakṣus — āditya, karṇau — śrotra — diśas, tvāc — lomāni — oṣadhi-vanaspatayaḥ, hṛdaya — manas — candramas, nābhi — apāna — mṛtyu, śiśna — retas — āpas*. Note the similarity between the creative process and other Vedic cosmogonic descriptions analysed here, and at the same time the similarity with the links of the *pratītyasamutpāda*. The *ātman*, having realized its cognitive incapacity (in ŚB's expressions the lack of food and its own hunger, the *avidyā* link) creates its cosmic manifestation in the form of man (*ātmānaṃ puruṣavidham*), in which it settles the highest subjective power (the *vijñāna* link preceded by the will to create — *saṃskāra*).

42 Olivelle's translation (in Olivelle 1998, p. 317).

43 Olivelle's translation (in Olivelle 1998, p. 317).

44 *agni — vāc — mukha, vāyu — prāṇa — nāsike, āditya — cakṣus — akṣiṇī, diśas — śrotra — karṇau, oṣadhi-vanaspatayaḥ — lomāni — tvāc, candramas — manas — hṛdaya, mṛtyu — apāna — nābhi, āpas — retas — śiśna*. This is the final formation of the *ātman*'s self, corresponding to the final creation of the fire altar and cosmos in ŚB and BU and the *nāmarūpa* link in the *pratītyasamutpāda*. AU sees it also as the creation of the human being.

45 See Schayer 1988, p. 114. The difference lies in the number of the abodes, of which AU enumerates eight. Five abodes in AU (*mukha, nāsike, akṣiṇ, karṇau, tvāc*) agree with the abodes enumerated by the Buddha, the sixth is the heart (*hṛdaya*), which in the Buddha's chain is replaced by the mind (*manas*, connected with the heart also in AU). The last two (*nābhi, śiśna*) have cognitive meaning only in the Vedic context, so it is not surprising that they do not appear in the *pratītyasamutpāda*.

46 *atha yatraitad ākāśam anuviṣaṇṇaṃ cakṣuḥ sa cākṣuṣaḥ puruṣo darśanāya cakṣuḥ | atha yo vededaṃ jighrāṇīti sa ātmā gandhāya ghrāṇam | atha yo vededam abhivyāharāṇīti sa ātmābhivyāhārāya vāk | atha yo vededaṃ śṛṇavānīti sa ātmā śravaṇāya śrotram |* (4) *atha yo vededaṃ manvānīti sa ātmā | mano'sya daivaṃ cakṣuḥ |*. The image of sight dispersed in space refers to the Ṛgvedic images of the cosmogonic sunrise which creates the possibility of seeing and cognizing: *ākāśa* is the space which is brightened by the rising sun; *cākṣuṣaḥ puruṣaḥ* is *ātman* — the Creator of the world identified with the sun, who manifests himself in the form of a golden man standing in the space between the earth and the sky, marking the path of the rising sun and constituting the cosmic pillar (*skambha*). It is he who is aware of his will to perform subject-object cognition.

One possible Vedic source of *vedanā* as the effect of *sparśa* on the philological level seems to be BU 3.2.9, where the causative of √*vid* is used to denote the act of recognizing tactile contact (*tvāg vai grahaḥ | sa sparśenātogrāheṇa gṛhītaḥ | tvacā hi sparśān vedayate* |).

47 See Jurewicz 1995a, pp. 145–14; Jurewicz 1995b, pp. 120–24. BU 1.4.4, having presented a description of the birth of the human beings from the first sexual act between husband and wife, does not describe their creation but the creation of different masculine parts of the *ātman*, which — led by sexual craving, we can presume — looks for the appropriate feminine parts in order to join with them sexually: *sā gaurabhavad vṛṣabha itaraḥ | tāṃ sam evābhavat | tato gāvo 'jāyanta | vaḍavetarābhavad aśvavṛṣa itaraḥ | gardabhītarā gardabha itaraḥ | tāṃ sam evābhavat | tata ekaśapham ajāyata |* and so forth.

48 This reflects the cyclical character of Vedic cosmogony: the appearance of the poets precedes the manifestation of semen and desire in the Creator (a typically sexual image), and the poets repeat the Creator's activity.

49 This may also be expressed in the terminology of the *pratītyasamutpāda*: the poets meet an unknown object (symbolized in the Ṛigveda mainly by a rock or the night), which corresponds to the image expressed in the *pratītyasamutpāda* as *avidyā*; then they assume the subjective form (*vijñāna*), which is probably preceded by the will to get the object (*saṃskāra*; the presence of this will is guaranteed by the sexual metaphor used to describe the poets' activity). The next stage is the recognition of the object and its creation (*nāmarūpa*). This correspondence with the *pratītyasamutpāda* is especially clear at BU 1.4.4. The idea that man repeats the Absolute's creative activity is also present in the interpretation of the ritual in ŚB which is the step-by-step repetition of the cosmogony of Prajāpati.

50 See Mejor 1996, p. 124.

51 My interpretation is different from that of Frauwallner (1990, Vol. 1, p. 220), who

postulated that the two shorter chains came first and were then superficially joined together.

52 See Oldenberg 1994, pp. 223–24.

53 See for example RV 3.31, 4.1–3, 9.97.39, 10.109.4, 10.169.2. Aṅgirases as sons of Agni: RV 1.71.8. Agni himself is called Aṅgiras (see for example RV 1.31.1. 1.127.2, 6.11.3, 10.92.15) and *kaví* (e.g. RV 1.149.3, 4.15.3, 5.15.1, 6.7.1).

54 The covetous burning identified with devouring is so characteristic a feature of the fire that it becomes the basis for comparisons: RV 10.113.8 *raddhám vṛtrám áhim índrasya hánmanāgnir ná jámbhais tṛṣv ánnam āvayat* ||. Agni as *tātṛṣāṇá* RV 1.31.7, 2.4.6, 6.15.5 *ā́ yó ghṛṇé ná tātṛṣāṇó ajáraḥ*, while he burns the trees and the bush RV 1.58.2,4, 7.3.4, 10.91.7. See also RV 4.7.11 *tṛṣú yád ánnā tṛṣúṇā vavákṣa tṛṣúṃ dūtáṃ kṛṇute yahvó agníh | vā́tasya meḷíṃ sacate nijū́rvann āśúṃ ná vājayate hinvé árvā* ||, RV 1.140.3 *tṛṣucyút*, RV 4.4.1 *tṛṣvī́m anu prásitiṃ drūṇāno*. The second meaning of the forms of the root √*tṛṣ* is the state caused by the influence of the warmth: thirst (RV 1.85.11, 1.116.9, 1.173.11, 1.175.6, 5.57.1, 7.33.5, 7.69.6, 7.89.4, 7.103.3, 9.79.3), lack of water (RV 4.19.7), sweating (ṚV 1.105.7). In RV 8.79.5 form of the root √*tṛṣ* refers to mental desire (*arthíno yánti céd ártham gáchān íd dadúṣo rātím | vavṛjyús tṛṣyataḥ kā́mam* ||).

55 See above, *saṃskāra*. Compare the void experienced by Prajāpati expressed in ŚB by the forms of the root √*ric*, see also ŚB 2.2.4, BU 1.2. It has already been noted that the state of primal ignorance is also identified with death. It is interesting to compare this state with what Gombrich (1996, p. 78) says about Māra: "Buddhist Māra at the same time represents desire, and the life he is urging is the life in the world, performing the fire sacrifice (*aggihutta*)". In the Veda, death appears in the beginnings of cosmogony and, identified with hunger and Agni, comprises desire. I would wonder, then, whether *aggihutta* should be taken in its narrow, ritual meaning; it may be better to understand it as referring to fire as the metaphysical principle of cosmogony and life.

56 In RV *tṛ́ṣṇā* is joined with the *nírṛti* symbolizing the pre-creative state (1.38.6 *mó ṣú ṇaḥ párā-parā nírṛtir durháṇā vadhīt | padīṣṭá tdurṣṇayā sahá* ||) or with the enemies of the Aryans (RV 1.130.8) symbolizing the same (because they are dark (e.g. RV 1.130.8), they are asleep (RV 4.51.3), they are not able to cognize (e.g. RV 3.18.2), to speak in a proper way (e.g. RV 3.34.10), or to perform sacrifices (e.g. RV 7.6.3)).

57 This idea goes back to RV (e.g. the idea of *apā́ṃ nápāt*) and is developed in later Vedic thought. Prajāpati's *ātman* is created in the process of burning (√*tap*) and has the form of the fire altar; the confirmation of the Creator's identity with fire constitutes the last act of the cosmogony. In ŚB 2.2.4 creation is the act of blowing out the fire identified with *prāṇa*. In ŚB 10.5.3 the transformations of the *manas* end with the manifestation of fire. There are also evident proofs that the idea of the Upaniṣadic *ātman* goes back to the idea of fire, for instance the identification of Agni and *ātman* with *prāṇa* and the wind (already in RV 1.34.7, 7.87.2) and with the sun (RV 1.115.1, 1.163.6). In RV 1.73.2 Agni is compared to the *ātman*. The Upaniṣadic evidence also attests the fiery nature of the *ātman*, who is the creative process transforms through burning (BU 1.4, AU √*tap*) and congealing under the influence of the warmth (AB √*mūrch*). See also BU 1.4.7, where the *ātman* divided into names and forms is compared to the fire hidden in its nest (note 37), and also CU 3.13.7–8, where the means of cognition of the *ātman* are the means of cognition of the fire: *tasyaiṣā dṛṣṭiḥ* | (7) *yatraitad asmiñ śarīre saṃsparśenoṣṇimānaṃ vijānāti* | *tasyaiṣā śrutir yatraitat karṇāv apigṛhya ninadam iva nadathur ivāgner iva jvalata upaśṛṇoti* |.

58 See Gombrich 1996, pp. 48, 67–69; also, Oldenberg 1994, pp. 223–24

59 See Oldenberg 1994, pp. 223–24.

60 What is more, it is the very cognitive act directed to an object which assures the

existence of the subject which *ex definitione* is the cognizing entity: at the moment when the cognition is interrupted, it ceases to be the subject. The fulfilment of self-cognition and the disappearance of the desire for it to continue means the end of the world, just as for the Buddha the disappearance of craving means the end of the process realized in all the links of the *pratītyasamutpāda*.

61 AU 2.1.2–3: *sāsyaitam ātmānam atra gataṃ bhāvayati* (2) | *sā bhāvayitrī bhāvayitavyā bhavati* | *taṃ strī garbhaṃ bibharti* | *so'gra eva kumāraṃ jamnano'-gre'dhi bhāvayati* | *sa yat kumāraṃ janmano'gre'dhi bhāvayaty ātmānam eva tad bhāvayati* | (3)

62 *puruṣe ha vā ayam ādito garbho bhavati yad etad retaḥ* | *tad etat sarvebhyo'ṅgebhyas tejaḥ saṃbhūtam ātmany evātmānaṃ bibharti* | (2.1.1) *tat striyā ātmabhūyaṃ gacchati yathā svam aṅgaṃ tathā* | *tasmād enāṃ na hinasti* | (2.1.2.) *so 'syāyam ātmā puṇyebhyaḥ karmabhyaḥ pratidhīyate*/ *athāsyāyam itara ātmā kṛtakṛtyo vayogataḥ praiti* | *sa itaḥ prayann eva punar jāyate* | *tad asya tṛtīya janma* | (2.1.4).

63 Translation by Olivelle (1998, p. 321).

64 Mejor 1996, p. 122.

65 See Gombrich 1996, p. 62.

66 Smith 1989, pp. 73–75.

67 Smith 1989, p. 79.

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11

THE ASSESSMENT OF TEXTUAL AUTHENTICITY IN BUDDHISM*

Étienne Lamotte

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The Buddha never promised his disciples his unending assistance. He did not tell them that he would not leave them as orphans, nor that he would be with them in centuries to come. On the contrary, a short time after his Parinirvāṇa, he gave Ānanda to understand that he could no longer be counted upon: "It is only when the Tathāgata, leaving off contemplating every external object (*sabbanimittānaṃ amanasikāra*) and having destroyed every separate feeling (*ekaccānaṃ vedanānaṃ nirodhā*), remains plunged in objectless mental concentration (*animittaṃ cetosamādhiṃ upasampajja viharati*), it is only then that the Tathāgata's body will be at ease"[1]. In such a state, the master could do nothing further for his disciples.

Neither did the Buddha appoint himself a successor; he did not constitute his Saṃgha into an hierarchical church, a repository of his teaching and a perpetuator of his work. A short time after the Parinirvāṇa, Ānanda declared to the brahman Gopaka Moggallāna: "There is no special bhikkhu designated by the venerable Gotama (*bhotā Gotamana ṭhapito*), or chosen by the Saṃgha and designated by the Elders and monks (*saṃghena samato sambahulehi therehi bhikkhūhi ṭhapito*) to be our refuge after the disapperance of the Buddha, and in whom we could henceforth take refuge"[2]. Nevertheless, Ānanda continued: "We are not without a refuge (*paṭisaraṇa*); we have a refuge, we have the Doctrine (Dhamma) for a refuge". Here the disciple was alluding to some of his master's final words when he said: "Henceforth (after my decease), be your own lamp and your own refuge, seek no other refuge; may the Doctrine be your lamp and your refuge, seek no other refuge"[3].

In the beginning, before elaborating the doctrine of the Three Bodies (*trikāya*), the Buddha did not incarnate the Dharma which he left as an inheritance: "I did not create the twelve-limbed Doctrine", he declared, "and neither did anyone else create it"[4]. "Whether the Tathāgatas exist or do not exist, this dharma-nature of dharmas, this subsistence of dharmas remains stable"[5]. The Doctrine is superior to the Buddha; immediately after his Enlightenment,

Śākyamuni, having retired to the Herdsman's Banyan tree, had the following thought: "It is wrong to remain without having someone to esteem and respect; who, then, is that monk or brahman whom I could honour, respect and serve?" Finding no-one superior to himself, he then had the following inspiration: "Suppose I were to abide by the Doctrine which I myself discovered (*dhammo mayā abhisambuddho*) in order to honour, respect and serve it?"[6] And so it occurred.

Such is the Doctrine which the Buddha solemnly bequeathed to his disciples. Since it was nowhere consigned to writing, this legacy was in practice limited to the mere remembrance of the Buddha's teachings. The disciples had to determine for themselves the source of the Dharma, establish its authenticity and supply the correct interpretation of it. The heuristic and external study of the Dharma by the early Buddhists will be the subject of the present article, their exegetical method being reserved for a later study.[+]

I The sources of the Dharma

1. The principal and undisputed source is the very word of the Buddha (*buddhavacana*). Śākyamuni expounded a Dharma "good in the beginning, in the middle and at the end; its meaning (*artha*) is good, its letter (*vyañjana*) is good, it is homogenous, complete, pure; the brahma-faring is revealed in it"[7]. In his statement of beliefs (*agraprajñapti*), a Buddhist declares that: "Among all dharmas, whether compounded or not, the Dharma of renunciation (expounded by the Buddha) is the best of all"[8].

Its truth could never be questioned, for: "During the interval that began with the night when the Tathāgata entered Supreme Enlightenment and ended with the night he entered Nirvāṇa-without-remainder, all that he said, uttered and taught, all that is true and not false"[9]. His word remains for ever: "The sky will fall with the moon and the stars, the earth will rise up with the mountains and forests, the oceans will dry up; but the great Sages say nothing untrue"[10]. Truthful, the word of the Buddha is furthermore stamped with courtesy: "The Tathāgata does not utter any word he knows to be false (*abhutā*), incorrect (*ataccha*), useless (*anatthasaṃhita*) or, at the same time, unpleasant (*appiya*) and displeasing (*amanāpa*) to others"[11]. The good word of the Buddha is designated by four characteristics: "It is well spoken and not badly spoken (*subhāsitañ ñeva bhāsati no dubbhāsitaṃ*); in conformity with deliverance and not contrary to deliverance (*dhammañ ñeva bhāsati no adhammaṃ*); pleasant and not unpleasant (*piyañ ñeva bhāsati no appiyaṃ*); true and not false (*saccañ ñeva bhāsati no alikaṃ*)"[12]. In brief, we can conclude along with Aśoka in his edict at Bhairāt: "All that the blessed Lord Buddha said is well said" (*E kechi bhaṃte bhagavatā Budhena bhāsite sarve se subhāsita*)[13].

2. However, the Buddha was not the only one to expound the Dharma; during his own lifetime, he sent disciples on missions: *desettha bhikkhave dhammaṃ ādikalyāṇaṃ*, etc. (Vin I, p. 21, S I, p. 105; It, p. 111). Following their master's

example, the great disciples were zealous instructors (D II, pp. 104,106; III, p. 125; S V, p. 261; A IV, p. 310; Ud, p. 63), and the texts mention the talent and missionary activity of Śāriputra (S I, p. 190; III, p. 112; V, p. 162), Udāyi (Vin IV, pp. 20–21; S IV, p. 121; A III, p. 184), Abhibhūta (Th 1, v. 225), Nārada (A III, p. 58), Uttara (A IV, p. 162), Pūrṇa Maitrāyaṇīputra (S III, p. 106), Nandaka (M III, p. 276), the nun Isadāsī (Th 2, v. 404) and even Devadatta (Vin II, p. 199; A IV, p. 402)[14]. After the Buddha's decease, the disciples became the sole spokesmen for the Dharma. In order to stress that they limited themselves to transmitting the master's teaching, without adding anything themselves, they preceded their address with the sacred formula: *Evaṃ mayā ṣrutam ekasmin samaye* "Thus have I heard at one time". The formula indicates that the content of the sūtra dates back to the Buddha himself, but the Buddha, who was omniscient and had no master, could not say "I have heard" since that would lead to the supposition that he was ignorant of the matter concerned; it was his disciples who said "I have heard"; through the intermediary of Ānanda, the Buddha ordered his disciples to place this formula at the beginning of the sūtra in order to emphasize its authenticity[15].

3. Buddhists like to believe that the Dharma was also expounded by the sages (*ṛṣi*), gods (*deva*) and apparitional beings (*upapāduka*). Among the sages of the early times, Araka can be cited (A IV, p. 136), as also the disciples of previous Buddhas such as Vidhura (M I, p. 333) and Abhibhū (S I, pp. 155–6). The god Śakra, himself a disciple of the Buddha, maintained he proclaimed the Doctrine as he had heard and studied it: *yathāsutaṃ yathāpariyattaṃ dhammaṃ desemi* (D II, p. 284).

Therefore, the Dharma had various sources which tended, with time, to multiply. The Vinayas attempted to enumerate them. Those of the Mahāsāṃghikas (T 1425, ch.13, p. 336*a* 21) and the Mūlasarvāstivādins (T 1442, ch.26, p. 771*b* 22) counted no more than two. According to the former: "The Dharma is either what the Buddha proclaimed, or what he approved with his seal. What the Buddha proclaimed, it is the Buddha himself who proclaimed it; what the Buddha approved with his seal, it is the Śrāvaka disciples and other men who proclaimed it, and the Buddha approved it with his seal". The other Vinaya merely says that "The word Dharma signifies the Doctrine which was proclaimed by the Buddha and the Śrāvakas".

The Pāli Vinaya (IV, p. 15) and that of the Dharmaguptas (T 1428, ch.11, p. 639*a* 16) add two new sources: "The Doctrine", they say, "is what was proclaimed by the Buddha, the Śrāvakas, the sages (*ṛṣi*) and the gods (*deva*)". To this list the Sarvāstivādin Vinaya (T 1435, ch.9, p. 71*b* 1–2), followed by the Mppś. (T 1509, ch.2, p. 66*b* = *Traité* I, p. 81), further add the apparitional beings (*upapāduka*).

By being transmitted via so many spokesmen, the Saddharma ran the greatest of dangers. From the beginning, it should have been enclosed in a code of authentic writings, recognised by all the members of the Community unanimously; however, the Buddhists only belatedly perceived the necessity of a cod-

ification of the Dharma; moreover, the oral transmission of the Doctrine rendered such a task, if not impossible, at least very difficult.

It may be, as the Mppś. (T 1509, ch.2, p. 70*a* 20 = *Traité* I, p. 113) and Paramārtha[16] claim, that, in the very lifetime of the Buddha, Mahākātyāyana, the disciple from Avanti, has composed an explanatory collection of the Buddha's Āgama-sūtras. According to the Mppś. (ch.18, p. 192*b* = *Traité* II, pp. 1074–5), the collection originally contained 3,200,000 words; however, after the Buddha's decease, human life-span decreased, intelligence weakened and men became incapable of reciting it in full; some holy men who had "found the Path" then composed a summary in 384,000 words. This abridgement is possibly the basis of the Petakopadeśa, still consulted today in the south of the Indian continent. However, this work, of uncertain date and doubtful canonicity[17], was only considered authoritative in Ceylon.

Immediately after the Buddha's decease, the Elders (*sthavira*), assembled in council at Rājagṛha, "chanted the Doctrine (Dharma) and Discipline (Vinaya)", but we know none of the texts which were recited on that occasion. In fact, the narratives dealing with this Council come from chroniclers who mostly belonged to organised Buddhist schools, each having its own canonical writings. Each claims that the writings of his own school were compiled at Rājagṛha[18]. By their conflicting testimony, these authors show that they were no better informed than ourselves on the literary activity of the Council.

One thing seems certain: the sessions at Rājagṛha did not succeed in setting up a canon of writings which was universally acceptable to the Saṃgha and closed to the inclusion of any new texts. Five hundred bhikṣus, led by Purāṇa, did not take part in the Council; informed of the work carried out by the Elders, Purāṇa declared: "Venerable ones, the Doctrine and the Discipline have been well chanted by the Elders; nevertheless, I maintain that I retain the Doctrine in my memory just as I heard it, just as I obtained it from the very lips of the Blessed One"[19].

Some time after the Buddha's decease and the sessions of the Council, new sūtras were composed and enjoyed an authority equal to that of the older ones, and passed with them into the collection of each school. We can cite, for example, the Madhura- (M II, p. 83; T 99, ch.20, p. 142*a*), the Ghoṭamukha- (M II, p. 157) and the Gopakamoggallāna- (M III, p. 7; T 26, ch.36, p. 653*c*), which themselves take place at a time when the Buddha had already entered Parinirvāṇa; the Nārada- (A III, p. 57); T 125, ch.24, p. 679*a*), composed in the reign of Muṇḍa, Ajātaśatru's grandson; the Assalāyana-, many recensions of which (M II, p. 147; T 26, ch.37, p. 663*b*; T 71, p. 876*b*) mention the Yona-Kambojas of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom and the Yueh-chih of the Kuṣāṇa dynasty.

From the linguistic point of view, the early Buddhist texts were undoubtedly recited in the Middle Indian dialects of the eastern group. In any case, the titles of the works recommended by Aśoka in his edict at Bhairāt are in a special Māgadhi, more advanced from the phonetical point of view than the official Māgadhi of Aśoka's inscriptions. Practically nothing has come down to us of these Magadhan originals.

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Some time after the Buddha's decease and the sessions of the Council, new sūtras were composed and enjoyed an authority equal to that of the older ones, and passed with them into the collection of each school. We can cite, for example, the Madhura- (M II, p. 83; T 99, ch.20, p. 142*a*), the Ghoṭamukha- (M II, p. 157) and the Gopakamoggallāna- (M III, p. 7; T 26, ch.36, p. 653*c*), which themselves take place at a time when the Buddha had already entered Parinirvāṇa; the Nārada- (A III, p. 57); T 125, ch.24, p. 679*a*), composed in the reign of Muṇḍa, Ajātaśatru's grandson; the Assalāyana-, many recensions of which (M II, p. 147; T 26, ch.37, p. 663*b*; T 71, p. 876*b*) mention the Yona-Kambojas of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom and the Yueh-chih of the Kuṣāṇa dynasty.

From the linguistic point of view, the early Buddhist texts were undoubtedly recited in the Middle Indian dialects of the eastern group. In any case, the titles of the works recommended by Aśoka in his edict at Bhairāt are in a special Māgadhi, more advanced from the phonetical point of view than the official Māgadhi of Aśoka's inscriptions. Practically nothing has come down to us of these Magadhan originals.

The Aśokan period marks the end of what can be called the early or pre-canonical literature of Buddhism. The enormous expansion undergone by the Saddharma during the great emperor's reign constituted terrain conducive to the formation of schools and sects. Spatially separated, individual communities asserted themselves increasingly: each of them determined to compile its own collection of writings. These separate canons – which have come down to us complete or incomplete, in original texts or in translations – all derive from a common basis constituted by the early Buddhist literature. They differ in content (insertion of new texts or even of new collections[20]), in layout of the sections and in language: Pāli, Sanskrit or Hybrid Sanskrit. These canons were never closed except perhaps by the extinction itself of the sects to which they belonged; in fact, in the course of time, they grew ever larger with the addition of new compositions. In the Pāli Canon, the Vinayapiṭaka contains a Parivāra, a later work by a Sinhalese monk; the Suttapiṭaka includes a fifth collection, the Khuddakanikāya, which has no exact equivalent in the collections of the other schools; its authority was disputed even among the Sinhalese since, at the time of Buddhaghosa (5th century A.C.), the commentator Sudinna Thera, under the pretext that there is no Word of the Buddha not in any sutta (*asuttanāmakaṃ Buddhavacanaṃ nāma n'atthīti*), rejected the majority of the books of which it was composed[21]; even today, Sinhalese, Burmese and Thai Buddhists differ over the exact content of the Khuddakanikāya[22]. The Sarvāstivādin writings are particularly uncertain: the Saṃyuktāgama includes whole chapters on the legend of Aśoka (T 99, ch.25 sq.), and the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya describes in detail the conversion of north-west India and even goes so far as to mention Kaniṣka (T 1448, ch.9, pp. 40*b*–41*c*).

The early Buddhist literature was completely absorbed into the unsettled mass of the schools' texts. The old recitation which, as we have seen, never succeeded in obtaining recognition by the whole community, completely disappeared. There was, according to the sacred expression, *mūlasaṃgītibhraṃśa* "a loss of the original recitation".

This fact, if the scholars are to be believed, had two fatal consequences. Firstly, it led to the disappearance of a large number of sūtras (*bahulāni sūtraṇy antarhitāni*): "Originally", says the Vibhāṣā (T 1545, ch.16, p. 79*b*), "the Ekottarikāgama listed the dharmas from 1 to 100; it now stops at 10; and, in those 1 to 10, much is lost, little remains. ... On Ānanda's attaining Nirvāṇa, 77,000 Avadānas and Sūtras, 10,000 Abhidharmaśāstras were lost". Among the vanished sūtras, the Vibhāṣā itself notes those which listed the six *hetus* (ch.16, p. 79*b*), the twenty-eight *anuśayas* (ch.46, p. 236), the thirty-seven *bodhipākṣikas* (ch.96, p. 496*a*). Identical remarks can be found in the Abhidharmakośa (II, p. 245n.) and in a whole series of texts collated by the historian Bu-ston[23].

Another even graver consequence was the deterioration of the Saddharma and the appearance of apocryphal texts (*adhyāropita, muktaka*). Already at the Council of Pāṭaliputra, under Aśoka, a certain Mahādeva wanted to incorporate the sūtras of the Mahāyāna into the Three Baskets, and this demand was one of

the causes of the schism between the school of the Elders (*sthāviriya*) and that of the Great Assembly (*mahāsāṃghika*)[24]. "After the Nirvāṇa of the Buddha", says the Vibhāṣā (T 1545, ch.185, p. 929*c*) "in the Sūtras, false Sūtras were placed; in the Vinaya, false Vinayas were placed; in the Abhidharma, false Abhidharmas were placed." The Abhidharmakośa (III, p. 40) in turn remarks: "What can we do about it? The Master has entered Nirvāṇa, the Saddharma no longer has a leader. Many sects have formed which debase the meaning and the letter as they fancy." The Buddha had foreseen this deterioration of the Dharma when he announced: "The suttas promulgated by the Tathāgata (*tathāgata bhāsita*), profound, profound in meaning, transcendental (*lokuttara*), teaching emptiness (*suññatāpaṭisaṃyutta*), they will not listen to with faith, they will not lend their ears to, they will not accept as true (*aññacittaṃ na upaṭṭhāpesanti*). ... But the suttas composed by poets (*kavikata*), poetic (*kāveyya*), of artistic syllabary and sound, profane (*bāhiraka*), promulgated by the disciples (*sāvakabhāsita*), they will believe. ... Thus it is that the suttas of the first category will disappear" (S II, p. 267; T 99, ch.47, p. 345*b*).

II The assessment of textual authenticity

The multiplication of the sources and their progressive deterioration particularly complicates an attempt at the assessment of textual authenticity, the rules of which – purely theoretical – are set out in the Mahāpadesasutta.

Here first are some bibliographical references to this sūtra. The Pāli text is in D II, p. 123, and A II, p. 167. A short Sanskrit adaptation in Mahāyānasūtralaṃkāra, ed. Lévi, p. 4; Bodhicaryāvatārapañjikā, ed. L. de La Vallée Poussin, p. 431; Abhidharmakośa, IX, p. 252. Several Chinese versions in Ch'ang a han and the parallel versions (T 1, ch.3, p. 17*c*; T 5, ch.1, p. 167*a*; T 6, ch.1, p. 182*c*; T 7, ch.1, p. 195*c*); Tsêng i a han, T 125, ch.20, p. 652*b*; Ken pen shuo ... tsa shih, T 1451, ch.37, p. 389*b*. References to the *mahāpadeśas* in Śikṣāsamuccaya, p. 63, 1.18, and Bodhisattvabhūmi, p. 108, 1.25. Commentary on the sutta by Buddhaghosa in Sumaṅgalavilāsinī II, pp. 565–8, and the Manorathapūraṇī III, pp. 158–60. Translation of the sutta by T.W. Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha* II, p. 133; R.O. Francke, *Dīghanikāya in Auswahl übersetzt*, p. 220; F.L. Woodward, *Gradual Sayings* II, p. 175; L. de La Vallée Poussin, 'Mahāpadeśa, Kalapadeśa' in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* III, 1938, p. 158.

Mahāpadeśa (divided as *mahā – apadeśa*) literally means "great argument". Buddhaghosa (1. *c*.) has the following explanation: *Mmumlahāpadese ti mahāokāse mahāapadese vā. Buddhadayo mahante apadisitvā vuttāni mahākāraṇāni ti attho*: "Alleged causes (or authorities) in referring to the Buddha or other great persons". We find in the Chinese versions the equivalents 大教法 *Ta-Chiao-fa* "great rules of teaching", 大決定 *Ta Chüeh-ching* "great determinants". 大廣演之義 *Ta Kuang-yen chih-i* "great rules of propagation"; the Tibetan version of the Bodhisattvabhūmi has *Chen po batan pa* "great instructions". Modern translators render *mahāpadeśa* as "true authorities" or "great

authorities" (Rhys Davids, Woodward), "Hipweis (auf eine Autorität)" (Francke), "règles ou références" (de la Vallée Poussin).

Pli recension of the Mahāpadeśa. Here, while omitting unnecessary repetitions, is an as literal as possible translation of the Mahāpadesasutta (D II, p. 123; A II, p. 167): In a certain case, a bhikkhu could say: Venerable ones, from the lips of the Blessed One (*sammukhā bhagavato*), I have myself heard (*sutaṃ*) and learnt (paṭiggahītaṃ) this, and this is therefore the Dhamma, Vinaya and Teaching of the master (*satthu sāsanaṃ*).

Furthermore, a bhikkhu could say: In such and such a place, there resides a Community (*saṃgha*) where there are Elders (*saṭṭhera*) and Leaders (*sapāmokkha*); from the lips of that Community, I have myself heard and learnt this, and this is therefore Dhamma, etc.

Furthermore, a bhikkhu could say: In such and such a place, there reside many learned (*bahussuta*) bhikkhu Elders, having received the Scripture (*āgatāgama*), knowing by heart the Dhamma (*dhammadhara*), the Vinaya (*vinayadhara*) and the Summaries (*mātikādhara*); from the lips of those Elders, I have myself heard and learnt this, and this is therefore Dhamma, etc.

Furthermore, a bhikkhu could say: In such and such a place there resides a single bhikkhu Elder, learned, having received the Scripture, knowing by heart the Dhamma, the Vinaya and the Summaries; from the lips of that Elder, I have myself heard and learnt this, and this is therefore Dhamma, Vinaya and Teaching of the master.

In the four cases envisaged, the Buddha[25] orders his monks to apply the following rule: That bhikkhu's utterance (*bhāsita*) should be neither approved (*abhinanditabba*) nor rejected (*paṭikkositabba*). Without either approving them or rejecting them, those words and syllables (*tāni padavyañjanāni*), having been carefully understood (*sādhukaṃ uggahetvā*), should be collated with the Sutta (*sutte otāretabbāni*), compared with the Vinaya (*vinaye sandassetabbāni*). If, collated with the Sutta, compared with the Vinaya, they cannot be found in the Sutta (*na c'eva sutte otaranti*), then the following conclusion should be reached: "Certainly, this is not the Word of the Blessed One (*bhagavato vacanaṃ*) and has been misunderstood (*duggahītaṃ*) by that bhikkhu, that Community, those Elders or that Elder", and you will in consequence reject that text. If the words and syllables proposed . . . are found in the Sutta and appear in the Vinaya, the following conclusion should be reached: "Certainly, this is the Word of the Blessed One and has been well understood (*suggahītaṃ*) by that bhikkhu, that Community, those Elders or that Elder".

Sanskrit recension of the Mahāpadeśa. The Sanskrit formula seems to be a development of the Pāli formula, as it also requires that the proposed text "does not contradict the nature of things".

Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra, p. 4: *Buddhavacanasyedaṃ lakṣaṇaṃ yat sūtre 'vatarati vinaye saṃdṛśyate dharmatāṃ ca na vilomayati*: "The characteristic mark of the Word of the Buddha is that it is found in the Sūtra, appears in the Vinaya and does not contradict the nature of things".

Bodhicaryāvatārapañjikā. p. 431: *Yad guruśiṣya paramparayamnāyāyātaṃ buddhavacanatvena yac ca sūtre 'vatarati saṃdṛśyate dharmataṃ ca na vilomayati tad buddhavacanaṃ nānyat*: "Whatever reaches us as the Word of the Buddha traditionally through the succession of masters and disciples, what is found in the Sūtra, appears in the Vinaya, does not contradict the nature of things, is the Word of the Buddha and nothing else".

This conformity with the nature of things is also required by the Abhidharmakośa IX, p. 252, and a post-canonical Pāli text, the Nettipakaraṇa, p. 22

Interpretation of the text. The Mahāpadesasuttanta includes two distinct parts:

1. The Buddha first determines an established usage among the monks: when a bhikṣu wanted to have some or other text admitted by the community of monks, he appealed to one of the four "great authorities", of unequal but sufficient value: the authority of the Buddha, of a specific Saṃgha, of several Elders who did not constitute a Saṃgha but were especially learned, of a single especially learned Elder.

It is essential to note that the Buddha does not condemn this usage; he merely establishes that reference to the Great Authorities alone is not sufficient to guarantee the authenticity of a text. This is well in keeping with his character since, even if he found it indispensable to expound the Saddharma to mankind, he never asked that he be taken at his word. After a particularly important discourse, he addressed his monks with these words: "And now, monks, that you know and think thus, are you going to say: We honour the Master and, through respect for the Master, we say this or that? We will not do so, Lord. What will you assert, O monks, is it not what you yourselves have realised (ñātaṃ), seen (*diṭṭhaṃ*) and grasped (*viditaṃ*)? It is just so, Lord." (M I, p. 265; T 26, ch.54, p. 769*b*).

2. In this spirit, and however firm the authorities on which a text rests may be, the Buddha asks his disciples to discover also whether it is found in the Sūtra, appears in the Vinaya and, according to the Sanskrit formula, whether it contradicts the nature of things.

How is this demand to be interpreted? Is it merely a matter of discovering whether the proposed text is found in the Scriptures? This is what we are led to believe by the translation by R.O. Francke, 1.*c*. p. 220 [tr.]: "Rather should you (try) to ascertain whether the Bhikkhu's assertion can, word for word and syllable by syllable, be compared to the Sutta (footnote: or a Sutta) and authenticated by the Vinaya". However, this interpretation is unacceptable since, as we have seen, the Buddhists never possessed a corpus of writings of indisputable authority and able to serve as a norm for the whole community. Had they possessed such, they would have rejected any new text foreign to the original compilation as apocryphal.

Setting aside the commentary by Buddhaghosa who constructs the most fanciful hypotheses[26], we will try to interpret the sūtra in the light of the Chinese translations:

T 1, ch.3, p. 17*c*: If a bhikṣu speaks these words: "Venerable ones, in such and such a village, such and such a kingdom, I heard and received this teach-

ing", you should neither believe nor reject what he tells you. You should, as to the Sūtras, discover the true and the false; relying on the Vinaya, relying on the Dharma, discover the essential and the ancillary (*pên mo*). If the text (proposed by the bhikṣu) is not Sūtra, is not Vinaya, is not Dharma, you should say to him: "The Buddha did not say that, you have grasped it wrongly. Why? I rely on the Sūtra, I rely on the Vinaya, I rely on the Dharma, and what you have just said is in contradiction (*virodha*) to the Dharma".

T 1451, ch.37, p. 389*b-c*: The Bhagavat said to Ānanda: It is thus that one can know if a teaching is true or false. As from today, you should rely on the teaching of the Sūtras and not rely on (the authority) of a person (*pudgala*). How can one rely on the teaching and not rely on a person? if a bhikṣu should speak these words: "Venerable ones, formerly I heard this word of the Tathāgata and, having heard it, I remembered it; I say that this is the Doctrine of the Sūtras. I say that this is the Teaching of the Vinaya and is truly the Word of the Buddha". When a bhikṣu, having heard that, speaks thus to you, he should be neither reproved nor rebuffed; you should listen to what he says and remember clearly the syllables and phrases; then you should return to the basic sources (住處), examine the Sūtra literature and the Vinaya teaching. If what he has said is in contradiction to the Sūtra and the Vinaya, you should tell him: "What you said is not the Word of the Buddha; it is something which you have misunderstood, it does not rely on either the Sūtra or the Vinaya; it should be rejected".

So therefore, in order that a text proposed with reference to one of the four Great Authorities be guaranteed, it is not necessary for it to be literally reproduced in the Scriptures, it is enough that its general purport be in keeping with the spirit of the Sūtras, the Vinaya and the Buddhist doctrine in general. In fact, the spirit of the Sūtras is condensed in the Discourse on the Four Noble Truths; the Vinaya prescriptions are essentially aimed at the appeasing of the passions, and the keystone of Buddhist philosophy is the theory of Dependent Origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) which Aśvajit summarised for Śrīputra in a famous stanza, untiringly reproduced on Buddhist monuments: *Ye dharmā hetuprabhāvā*, etc. The Nettipakaraṇa (p. 22) has perfectly grasped the spirit of the Mahāpadesasutta, when it remarks: "With which Sutta should the texts be collated? With the Four Noble Truths. With which Vinaya should they be compared? With the Vinaya (which combats) craving (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*). Against which doctrine should they be measured? Against the doctrine of Dependent Origination".

Taking the best they could from the late sources they had at their disposal, the Buddhists drew their inspiration, for the assessment of textual authenticity, from very sure principles, successively using external and internal criteria. First, they endeavoured to test the extrinsic value of the texts by determining their origin: the Buddha, a specific Samgha, a single or several particularly learned Elders. Then, they went on to the examination of their intrinsic value, and sought to find out whether the texts proposed for their approval were indeed in the spirit of the Dharma, Discipline and Buddhist philosophy.

Abbreviations

A Aṅguttara Nikāya D Dīgha Nikāya It Itivuttaka M Majjhima Nikāya Mppś Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra Th 1 Theragāthā Th 2 Therīgāthā Sn Sutta-Nipāta T Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō Ud Udāna Vin Vinaya *Traité Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse de Nāgārjuna*. Annotated translation of Mppś by É.Lamotte. 5 vols, Louvain 1949–80.

Notes

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1 D II, p. 100; T 1, ch.2, p. 15*b*.

2 M III, p. 9; T 26, ch.36, p. 654*a-b*.

3 D II, p. 100; T 1, ch.2, p. 15*b*; T 1451, ch. 36, p. 387*b*. Also see D III, pp. 55, 77; S V, p. 163; T 1, ch.6, p. 39*a*; T 26, ch.15, p. 520*b*.

4 Tsa a han, T 99, No.299, ch.12, p. 85*b-c*; reproduced in the Mppś, T 1509, ch.2, p. 75*a* (= *Traité* I, p. 157); ch.32, p. 298*a* (= *Traité* V, p. 2191).

5 This is the well-known formula: *Utpādad vā tathāgatānāṃ anutpādād vā tathāgatānāṃ sthitaiveyaṃ dharmānāṃ dharmatā dharmasthititā*; cf. S II, p. 25; A I, p. 286; Visuddhimagga, p. 518; Śālistambasūtra, ed. de La Vallée Poussin, p. 73; Pañeasāhasrikā, p. 198; Aṣṭasāhasrikā, p. 274; Laṅkavatāra, p. 143; Kośavyākhyā, p. 293; Madhyamakavṛtti, p. 40; Pañjikā, p. 588; Śikṣāsamuccaya, p. 14; Daśabhūmikā, p. 65.

6 S I, pp. 138–40; T 99, No.1188, ch.44, pp. 321*c*–322*a*. Also see an aberrant version of this sūtra in Mppś, T 1509, ch.10, p. 131*c* (- *Traité* I, pp. 586–7).

+ Published as "La critique d'Interprétation dans le bouddhisme" in Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves IX, Brussels 1949, pp. 341–61.

7 An extremely widespread formula: Vin I, pp. 35;242; D I, p. 62; M I, p. 179; S V, p. 352; A I, p. 180, etc.

8 See the complete text of the *agraprajñaptis* in A II, p. 34; III, p. 35; It, p. 87; Divyāvadāna, p. 155; Avadānaśataka I, pp. 49–50, 329–30.

9 D III, p. 135; A II, p. 24; It, p. 121; Chung a han, T 26, ch.34, p. 654*b* 18; Mppś, T 1509, ch.1, p. 59*c* (= *Traité* I, p. 30). On the modifications which the Mahāyāna brought to this text, see Madhyamakavṛtti, pp. 366,539; Pañjikā, p. 419; Luṅkāvatāra, pp. 142–3.

10 Divyāvadāna, pp. 268,272; also see T 310, ch.102, p. 574*a*; T 190, ch.41,p. 843*b*.

11 M I, p. 395.

12 On III, 3, p. 78.

13 E. Hultzsch, *Inscriptions of Asoka*, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol. I, Oxford 1925, p. 173.

14 I have taken these references from the fine work by M. and W. Geiger, *Pali Dhamma vornehmlich in der Kanonischen Literatur*, Munich 1920, pp. 40–1.

15 This is according to the Mppś, T 1509, ch.2, p. 67*a* (= *Traité* I, p. 87).

16 See P. Demiéville, "L'Origine des sectes bouddhiques", Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques I, Brussels 1931–2, pp. 49–50.

17 Cf. E.Hardy (ed.), Nettipakaraṇa, p. viii sq.; M.Bode, *Pāli Literature of Burma*, RAS of Great Britain and Ireland, London 1909, repr.1966, p. 5.
18 See J. Przẏluski, *Le Concile de Rājagṛha*, Paris 1926, pp. 353–9.
19 Pāli Vin II, p. 290; J. Przyluski, *op.cit.*, pp. 159–61, 195–9.
20 Like the Abhidharmapiṭaka in the Vibhajyavādin and Sarvāstivādin schools.
21 Sumaṅgalavilāsinī II, p. 566; Manorathapūraṇī III, p. 159.
22 Cf. M. Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature* II, Calcutta 1933, p. 77, n.3.
23 See E. Obermiller, *Bu-ston, History of Buddhism* II (Materialen zu Kunde des Buddhismus, Nos.18,19) Heidelberg 1931–2, pp. 169–71.
24 P. Demiéville, *op. cit.*, p. 30. The same remark in Dīpavaṃsa V, vv. 32–8 regarding the Mahāsaṃgīti implemented by the bhikṣu Mahāsāṃghika after the Council of Vaiśālī.
25 It could be believed that the Buddha here is only a figurehead and that the rules for assessment were set up by scholars who lived long after him. On the Four Authorities, etc., also see the Mppś in *Traité* I, pp. 536–40.
26 Thus, according to Buddhaghosa (Sumaṅgalavilāsinī II, p. 565 sq.), in the phrase sutte otaranti vinaye sandissanti, sutta would designate the Suttavibhaṅga (first part of the Vinayapiṭaka), and *vinaya*, the Khandakas (second part of the Vinayapiṭaka); or else, *sutta* would designate the Suttapiṭaka, and *vinaya*, the whole Vinayapiṭaka; or again, sutta would designate the Suttapiṭaka and Vinayapiṭaka, while *vinaya* would refer to the Vinayapiṭaka; finally, sutta would include in itself the whole of the Word of the Buddha contained in the Tipiṭaka.

12

THE ASSESSMENT OF TEXTUAL INTERPRETATION IN BUDDHISM*

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In *India Antiqua*, a volume of articles published in honour of the eminent archaeologist, J. P. Vogel, there is a contribution [by myself] entitled 'La critique d'authenticité dans le bouddhisme[1]. It was concerned with the Mahāpadeśa "Discourse on the Great Authorities", in which the rules for the assessment of textual authenticity according to the minds of Buddhist scholars were recorded: for a text to be considered as the "Word of the Buddha", it must be based on the authority of the Buddha himself, of a formally constituted Community, of one or several particularly learned "Elders"; it should further be in harmony with the doctrinal texts (*sūtra*), the disciplinary collections (*vinaya*) and the spirit of Buddhist philosophy.

Once the authenticity of a text has been duly established, it remains to supply a correct interpretation of it, to understand what the author is saying and, especially, what he is trying to say; it is to this assessment of interpretation that we wish to devote the present article and offer it in homage and respect to Professor Henri Grégoire, whose splendid discoveries in the fields of Byzantine studies, epic literature and comparative mythology are sealed with the stamp of the most sure assessment and the most penetrating exegesis. While not attaining his incomparable virtuosity, the early Buddhist thinkers attempted to define and apply the rules of sound textual interpretation. Such rules are formulated in the Catuḥpratisaraṇasūtra "Sūtra of the Four Refuges", of which we possess several versions in Sanskrit and Chinese. However, while the Mahāpadeśasūtra, which deals with the assessment of textual authenticity, appears in the earliest collections of the Sūtras and Vinayas, the Catuḥpratisaraṇasūtra, which is devoted to the assessment of interpretation, is unknown to the canonical literature in its strict sense and seems to have been compiled at a later date. It first appears in compositions pertaining to the Sarvāstivādin-Vaibhāṣika school, such as the Abhidharmakosa (tr. L. de La Vallée Poussin, IX, p. 246), the Abhidharmakośavyākhyā (ed. U. Wogihara, p. 704) and the Mahāvyutpatti (ed. R. Sakaki, Nos. 1546–9); it is again found in the sūtras and śāstras of the Mādhyamika

school, such as the Akṣayamatinirdeśasūtra quoted in the Madhyamakavṛtti (ed. L. de La Vallée Poussin, p. 43), the Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra (tr. *Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse*, I. pp. 536–40) and the Dharmasaṃgraha (ed. Max Müller, Ch.LIII); finally, it is repeated in several treatises of the Yogācāra school, such as the Bodhisattvabhūmi (ed. U. Wogihara, p. 256) and the sūtrālaṃkāra (ed. S. Lévi, p. 138). Nevertheless, even if the sūtra in question was not given its definitive form until a period after the establishment of the Buddhist sects and schools, the ideas which it contains had already been evolving since the earliest texts of the Buddhist Canon.

The Catuḥpratisaraṇasūtra posits, under the name of Refuges (*pratisaraṇa*), four rules of textual interpretation: 1. The Dharma is the refuge and not the person; 2, the spirit is the refuge and not the letter; 3. the sūtra of precise meaning is the refuge and not the sūtra of provisional meaning; 4. (direct) knowledge is the refuge and not (discursive) consciousness[2]. As will be seen, the aim of this sūtra is not to condemn in the name of sound assessment certain methods of interpretation of the texts, but merely to ensure the subordination of human authority to the spirit of the Dharma, the letter to the spirit, the sūtra of provisional meaning to the sūtra of precise meaning, and discursive consciousness to direct knowledge.

I. The Doctrine (*dharma*) is the refuge and not the person (*puruṣa*). – This first principle merely consists of summarizing the rules of the assessment of textual authenticity which were already formulated in the Mahāpadeśasutra : in order that a text be accepted as the "Word of the Buddha", it is not sufficient to call upon the authority of the Buddha himself, upon a religious Community (*saṃgha*) which has been formally established, or upon one or several particularly learned Elders; the text in question must also be found in the Sūtra (*sūtra 'vatarati*), appear in the Vinaya (*vinaye saṃdṛśyate*) and not contradict the nature of things (*dharmatāṃ ca na vilomayati*). In other words, adherence to the Doctrine cannot be dependent on human authority, however respectable, since experience shows that human evidence is contradictory and changeable; adherence should be based on personal reasoning (*yukti*), on what one has oneself known (*jñāta*), seen (*dṛṣṭa*) and grasped (*vidita*)[3]. "By relying on reasoning and not on a person's authority, one does not deviate from the meaning of reality, because one is autonomous, independent of others when confronted with rationally examined truths"[4]. Nevertheless, in the case of a beginner who is unable to understand by himself the teaching which has been given to him, faith in the Master's word is a provisional necessity: "The (beginner) merely adheres to the profound texts which his intelligence cannot fathom; he tells himself those are truths within reach of the Buddha and not within reach of our intelligence, and he refrains from rejecting them. In this way, he is protected from any fault"[5]. To the mind of Buddhists, the judicious application of the *mahāpadeśas* is directed less at supplying the historian with rules for assessment than at making the devotee become indissolubly wedded to the Saddharma. If he is incapable of grasping it himself, he should at least adhere to it with faith, since "by adhering to the Holy Dharma, one does not perish"[6].

II. The spirit (*artha*) is the refuge and not the letter (*vyañjana*). – The meaning is single and invariable, while the letter is multiple and infinitely variable. Buddhist exegetes often wondered anxiously whether one and the same entity or one and the same truth was not concealed under different terms. The monks of the Macchikāsaṇḍa debated among themselves in order to know whether the expressions "fetter" (*saññojana*) or "fettering things" (*saññojaniyā dhammā*) designated one and the same thing (*ekattha*) or different things (*nānattha*)[7]. The venerable Godatta thought he knew, from a certain point of view, that the four mental liberations (*cetovimutti*) are identical in meaning but different in expression (*ime dhammā ekatthā vyañjanaṃ eva nānan ti*)[8]. The Four Noble Truths which were expounded in Vārāṇasī have only one acceptable meaning, but they can be explained in an infinity of ways. Hence, with regard to the First Truth, "the fact of (universal) suffering is true, not false or changeable, but many are the subtleties and terms, many are the means of explaining that First Noble Truth of suffering"[9].

Although the spirit takes precedence, the Good Doctrine is perfect in its spirit and in its letter. This twofold perfection characterises the Dharma which the Buddha expounded; it is also found in a good monk, a good instructor and a student. A formula which is repeated incessantly throughout the canonical writings states that the Buddha expounds a Dharma which is "good in the beginning, in the middle and at the end: the meaning is good (*sāttha*) and the letter is good (*savyañjana*)". The Sūtrālaṃkāra explains that the meaning is good because it applies to conventional truth and absolute truth, and that its letter is good because the phrases and syllables are intelligible[10]. The early texts laud the perfect monk "who correctly grasps the meaning and correctly applies its terms"[11]; his colleagues consider it a gain and an advantage to have a fellow-member who is so expert in the meaning and the formula[12]. Conversely, if a monk has discovered the right formula but misunderstands the meaning, his colleagues should chide him patiently and say to him: "That formula (which we accept as you do), does it not have this meaning rather than that meaning?"[13]; if a monk correctly grasps the meaning but uses a faulty expression, he should be taxed: "In order to render that meaning (over which we are in agreement), is not this formula more suitable than that formula?"[14]. A good speaker is he who is not mistaken over the spirit or the letter[15], and it is all for the best if he speaks at length and well and if those listening to him are capable of judging whether he is right or wrong[16]. The talented instructor "teaches the phrases and syllables according to the requisite order; then, once those phrases and syllables have been taught, he explains them from the point of view of their meaning according to the requisite order"[17]. It is advantageous for the student to hear the Dharma at the appropriate time and to examine its spirit at the appropriate time[18]. Nāgasena, who was a model disciple of Dhammarakkhita, learned in three months, with the help of a single recitation, the Word of the Buddha which is contained in the Three Baskets and, in a further three months, he mastered its meaning[19].

It ensues from what has just been described that the monk who limits himself to memorising the texts without attempting to understand them is failing in his duty: "There are some foolish men who learn the Dhamma, *suttas, geyas*, etc., by heart but once they have learned it by heart they do not examine the meaning in order to understand the texts. Those texts, the meaning of which they have not examined in order to understand them, do not please them and the only advantage they gain from their memorisation is to be able to contradict (their adversaries) and to give quotations; all the same, they do not reach the goal for the sake of which they memorised the Dhamma; those texts which they do not understand will, for a long time, earn them much sorrow and suffering. Why? Because those texts have not been understood"[20].

Whoever memorises the Dhamma like a parrot at least has the merit of being able to transmit it materially in an impeccable form. However, such a monk is one of those who "memorise texts which have not been understood and the phrases and syllables of which are wrongly arranged."[21]: such monks conduce to the confusion and destruction of the Saddhamma[22]. In fact, when the form is faulty, all hope of discovering the correct meaning is lost: "If the phrases and syllables are wrongly arranged, the meaning in turn is impossible to discover"[23]

It is clear that it is far from the intention of the Catuḥpratisaraṇasūtra to deny the importance of the letter, but only to subordinate it to the spirit. According to Buddhist concepts, there are cases in which the letter must be sacrificed for the sake of the spirit; its function is to indicate the meaning, but it is never able to express it in an adequate way.

That the letter is not absolutely indispensable is confirmed by the famous meeting between Śāriputra and Aśvajit, one of the Buddha's first five disciples[24]. The latter had just embraced the new religion when he was questioned by Śāriputra about Śākyamuni's teaching. Aśvajit at first attempted to evade Śāriputra by saying: "Friend, I am only a novice and it is not long since I left the world; I only recently embraced this Doctrine and Discipline. I cannot propound the Doctrine to its full extent (*vitthāreṇa dhammaṃ desetem*), but I can briefly indicate its spirit (*api ca saṃkhittena atthaṃ vakkhāmi*)." Then the wandering mendicant Śāriputra said to the venerable Aśvajit: "Let it be so, my friend. Tell me a little or a great deal of it, but speak to me of its spirit; I need only the spirit, so why be so preoccupied with the letter?[25]"

The letter indicates the spirit just as a fingertip indicates an object, but since the spirit is alien to syllables (*akṣaravarjita*), the letter is unable to express it in full. Purely literal exegesis is therefore bound to fail. The theme of the letter which kills and the spirit which enlivens is elaborated several times in the Laṅkāvatārasūtra, of which we will merely quote a page here: "O Mahamati, the son and daughter of good family should not interpret the spirit according to the letter (*yathārutārthābhiniveśa*) since reality is not connected with syllables (*nirakṣaratvāt tattvasya*). One should not act like those who look at the finger (*aṅgulipreksaka*): it is as if someone pointed out something with his finger to someone else and the latter persisted in staring at the fingertip (instead of

looking at the object indicated); similarly, just like children, foolish worldlings end their lives as attached to that fingertip which consists of the literal translation and, by neglecting the meaning indicated by the fingertip of literal interpretation, they never reach the higher meaning. It is as if someone were to give some rice to children, for whom it is the customary food, to eat but without cooking it; whoever were to act in such a way should be considered foolish, since he has not understood that the rice must first be cooked; equally, the non-arising and non-destruction (of all things) is not revealed if it has not been prepared; it is therefore necessary to train and not to act like someone who thinks he has seen an object merely by looking at a fingertip. For this reason, one should try and reach the spirit. The spirit, which is in isolation (*vivikta*), is a cause of Nirvāṇa, while the letter, which is bound up with discrimination (*vikalpasaṃbaddha*) favours Saṃsāra. The spirit is acquired in the company of educated people and, through learning (*bāhaśrutya*), one should be conversant with the spirit (*arthakauśalya*) and not conversant with the letter (*rutakauśalya*). To be conversant with the spirit is a view which is alien to the discussions of all the sectaries: it is not lapsing into it oneself and not making others lapse into it. In such conditions, there is a learning of the spirit. Such are those who should be approached by someone who seeks the spirit; the others, those who are attached to the literal interpretation, should be avoided by those who seek the truth"[26].

If scholars counselled the search for the spirit with so much insistence, it is because the meaning of the texts often lacks clarity and needs to be interpreted. This led to the imposition of the third rule:

III. The sūtra of precise meaning (*nītārtha*) is the refuge, not (the sūtra) the meaning of which requires interpretation (*neyārtha*). – This distinction is not accepted by the Mahāsāṃghika school which is of the opinion that "in all that the Blessed One expounded, there is nothing which does not conform to the meaning (*ayathārtha*), and that all the sūtras propounded by the Buddha are precise in meaning (*nītārtha*)[27]." However, that position is not easy to defend, since many sūtras contradict each other. Thus, to take just one example, the text of the Bimbisārasūtra states: "Foolish worldlings (*bālapṛthagjana*) who have not learned anything (*aśrutvat*) take the self for their self and are attached to the self. But there is no self (*ātman*) or anything pertaining to the self (*ātmīya*); the self is empty and anything pertaining to the self is empty[28]." This text, which denies the existence of a soul, is contradicted by another canonical passage in the words of which: "An individual (*ekapuggala*) born in the world, is born for the welfare of many[29]." If those two texts are taken literally, one is forced to conclude that the Buddha contradicted himself. For fear of maligning the Omniscient One, the Sarvāstivādins, followed by the scholars of the Mahāyāna, preferred to accept that certain sūtras should be taken literally while others should be interpreted. According to Vasumitra and Bhavya, theses 49 and 50 of the Sarvāstivādins state that the Blessed One uttered words which were not in accordance with the meaning (*ayārtha*), that sūtras spoken by the Buddha were not all precise in

meaning (*nītārtha*) and that the Buddha himself said that certain sūtras were indeterminate in meaning (*anītār – tha*)[30].

The need for a fluid exegesis is admirably emphasised in the *Treatise* by Nāgārjuna: "The Dharma of the Buddhas is immense, like the oçean. Depending on the aptitude of beings, it is expounded in various ways: sometimes it speaks of existence and sometimes of non-existence, eternity or permanence, suffering or happiness, the self or the not-self; sometimes it teaches the diligent practice of the threefold activity (of body, speech and mind) which includes all good dharmas, and sometimes it teaches that all dharmas are intrinsically inactive. Such are the manifold and diverse teachings; an ignorant person who hears them considers them to be perversions, but the wise man who penetrates the threefold teaching of the Dharma knows that all the words of the Buddha are the true Dharma and do not contradict each other. The threefold teaching is the teaching of the [Sūtra]-piṭaka, the Abhidharma and Emptiness[31]." Having defined it, the *Treatise* continues: "The man who penetrates the threefold teaching knows that the Buddha's teachings do not contradict each other. To understand that is the power of the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*) which, when confronted with all the Buddha's teachings, does not encounter any impediment. Whoever has not grasped the rule of the Prajñāpāramitā (will encounter numerous contradictions in the interpretation of the Dharma): if he takes up the teaching of the Abhidharma, he will lapse into realism; if he takes up the teaching on Emptiness, he will lapse into nihilism; if he takes up the teaching of the Piṭaka, he will lapse (sometimes) into realism and (sometimes) into nihilism[32]."

It was in order to answer the requirements of exegesis that the distinction between sūtras of precise meaning and sūtras of indeterminate meaning was conceived. The *nītārtha* sūtra (in Tibetan *ṅes paḥi don*; in Chinese, *liao i*) is a sūtra the meaning of which is clear (*vibhaktārtha*; cf. Kośa, III, p. 75) and explicit (*kathattha*; cf. Manorathapūraṇī, II, p. 118); when taught without any ulterior motive (*niḥparyāyadeśita*), it can and should be taken literally. In contrast, the *neyārtha* sūtra (in Tibetan, *draṅ baḥi don*; in Chinese, *pu liao i*) is one the meaning of which needs to be deduced (*yassa attho netabbo*; cf. Manorathapūraṇī, II, p. 118), because it is intentional (*ābhiprāyika*) and derives from a motivation (*paryāyadeśita*). The *neyārtha* sūtras constitute the *samdhāvacana*, the intentional teaching of the Buddha.

Three questions arise in connection with the *neyārtha* sūtras: should they be accepted? How can they be distinguished from *nītārtha* sūtras? How should they be correctly interpreted?

1. The *neyārtha* sūtras are just as much the Word of the Buddha as the *nītārtha* sūtras. They should therefore be accepted, and those who reject them by saying: "That is not the Word of the Buddha but the word of Māra" commit a serious fault in repuditing the Good Doctrine (*saddharmapratikṣepakarmāvāraṇa*). The Sarvadharmavaipulyasaṃgrahasūtra says: "Subtle, O Mañjuśrī, is the impediment which consists of repudiating the Good Doctrine. Whoever at times approves a text expounded by the Tathāgata and at others disapproves

another one is repudiating the Good Doctrine. Whoever repudiates the Good Doctrine in that way maligns the Tathāgata; repudiates the Doctrine and denies the Community[33]."

2. With regard to the means of distinguishing between *nītārtha* and *neyārtha* sūtras, the authors turn out to be reticent, and we can only examine their method of procedure in each particular case. There is a very clear impression that the distinction is based on purely subjective criteria, which explains why, quite frequently, the scholars are not in agreement.

The *Treatise* by Nāgārjuna (I, pp. 539–40), considers sūtras to be of precise meaning when the allegations are obvious and easily understood, and sūtras the meaning of which needs to be determined, those which through skilful means (*upāya*), say things which at first sight seem to be incorrect and which demand an explanation. For example, the sutta in the Aṅguttara (III, p. 41) on the five advantages of giving is a *nītārtha* sūtra, because it is obvious that giving is meritorious; in contrast, another sutta, which attributes the same advantages of giving to teaching, is *neyārtha* because it is less clear that teaching, which cannot be translated by material giving, is as meritorious as almsgiving. However, after due reflection, the teacher has the same merit as the donor since, by praising alms-giving in all manner of ways, he is combatting his own avarice and that of others.

In general, it is considerations of a doctrinal type which enable a decision to be reached as to whether a sūtra is precise in meaning or with a meaning to be determined. The Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna are in agreement in rejecting the belief in the self (*ātmagrāha*) and proclaim the non-existence of the individual (*pudgalanairātmya*). However, we find texts in both Vehicles in which the Buddha, in order to place himself within his listeners' range, speaks of a soul, a living being, a man, an individual, etc. Scholars consider such texts to be *neyārtha* and requiring explanation, if not correction. Conversely, they regard as *nītārtha* and literal the Hīnayāna texts in which there is a question of impermanence (*anitya*), suffering (*duḥkha*) and impersonality (*anātman*), as well as Mahāyāna passages which deal with universal emptiness (*śūnyatā*). Here are some quotations which illustrate this statement:

For Buddhaghosa (in Manorathapūraṇī, II, p. 118), sūtras in which it is a matter of one or several individuals (cf. Aṅguttara, I, p. 22) are *neyārtha* because "from the absolute point of view (*paramatthato*) no individual exists." In contrast, sūtras which deal with impermanence, suffering and the not-self (cf. Aṅguttara, I, p. 286) are *nītārtha*, since "whether or not the Tathāgatas appear in the world, that natural causality, that basic suchness of things remains."

The Akṣayamatinirdeśasūtra says: "Which are the doctrinal texts with a meaning to be determined (*neyārtha*) and which are the doctrinal texts of precise meaning (*nītārtha*)? The texts which have been expounded in order to teach the Path of Penetration (*mārgāvatārāya nirdiṣṭa*) are called *neyārtha*; those which have been expounded in order to teach the Fruit of Penetration (*phalāvatārāya nirdiṣṭa*) are called *nītārtha*. All texts which teach emptiness

(*śūnyatā*), signlessness (*ānimitta*), wishlessness (*apraṇihita*), effortlessness (*anabhisaṃskāra*), non-birth (*ajāta*), non-arising (*anutpāda*), non-existence (*abhāva*), the not-self (*anātman*), the absence of a living being (*jiva*), of an individual (*pudgala*) and of a Master (*svāmin*), such texts are called *nītārtha*[34]."

Finally, the Samādhirājasūtra in turn declares: "Whoever knows the value of texts with a precise meaning knows the (precise) way in which emptiness has been taught by the Sugata; however, wherever there is a matter of an individual, being or man, he knows that all those texts are to be taken as having a provisional meaning[35]."

The subjective nature of this criterion jumps to the eye and explains the frequent disagreement between scholars: each school tends to take literally the doctrinal texts which conform to its theses and to consider those which cause dilemmas as being of provisional meaning. These are some of the texts which have been disputed over:

The Vaibhāṣikas considered *āvidya* (ignorance) and the other links of Dependent Origination as so many specific entities; the Sautrāntikas were of the opinion that *āvidya* is not a thing apart, but a modality of *prajñā* (wisdom). In order to support their thesis, the Sautrāntikas cited as their authority a sūtra in which it is said: "What is *āvidya*? Non-knowledge in relation to the past (*pūrvānte ajñānam*)"; that sūtra, they said, is clear and precise in meaning (*nītārtha*); you cannot therefore claim it is a sūtra with a meaning to be determined (*neyārtha*). The Vaibhāṣikas responded: "Nothing substantiates that that sūtra is clear in meaning; the fact that it is expressed in terms of definition proves nothing[36]."

The Vātsīputrīyas, who believed in the existence of an ineffable Pudgala, based their authority on the Bhārahārasūtra in which it is said: "The bearer of the burden (of existence) is such-and-such a venerable one, with such-and-such a name, from such-and-such a family, such-and-such a clan, etc.[37]", and other similar sutras which they took literally. The other Buddhist schools, while not rejecting such texts, only accepted that they have a provisional meaning and are not authoritative; they resorted to sūtras which are explicit in meaning and formally taught that, within that supposed Pudgala, "there are merely things which are impermanent, conditioned, arisen from causes and conditions, and are created by action[38]."

In order to refute the existence of an external object, the Vijñānavādins took their authority from a passage in the Daśabhūmika (p. 49) which states that the triple world is mind only (*cittamātram idaṃ yad idaṃ traidhātukam*). However, the Mādhyamikas took them severely to task: "You are making yourselves ridiculous", they said, "the intention of the sūtra is nothing like it appears in your minds . . .; that text only teaches the unimportance of visible things, but not the denial of their existence." However, the Vijñānavādins persisted and produced a passage from the Laṅkāvatārasūtra (p. 47) in which it says: "The external thing, however it may appear, does not exist; it is the mind which appears in various guises, such as a body (*deha*), objects of pleasure (*bhoga*) and a place

(*sthāna*)." Nonetheless, the Mādhyamikas were determined to prove, in writing and by reasoning, that this quotation was provisional and not definitive[39].

3. The Mahāyāna attached the greatest importance to sūtras of indeterminate and provisional meaning and which constitute the intentional teaching of the Buddha. The expressions "intentional teaching" is rendered in Pāli and Sanskrit by *saṃdhāya bhāṣita* (Majjhima, I, p. 503; Bodh. bhūmi, p. 174), *saṃdhāya bhaṇita* (Dīpavaṃsa, V, 34), *saṃdhāya vāg bhāṣitā* (Vajracchedikā, p. 23), *saṃdhābhāṣita* (Saddharmapuṇḍarīka, pp. 125, 199, 233), *saṃdhābhāṣya* (ibid., pp. 29, 34, 60, 70, 273), *saṃdhāvacana* (ibid., p. 59), *saṃdhāya vacana* (Bodh. bhūmi, pp. 56, 108). In Tibetan, we find *dgoṅs te bśad pa*, and in Chinese *mi i yü yên* "the word of hidden thought". The *saṃdhābhāṣya* has already been the subject of many studies[40], so we will merely point out here the procedures which enable us to interpret and "discover the profound intentions of the Buddha" (*gambhīrārthasaṃdhinirmocanatā*, cf. Bodh. bhūmi, p. 303).

Sūtras of provisional meaning, which constitute the intentional teaching, should be understood in the light of sūtras the meaning of which is precise; the interpreter will then become determined to discover the point of view which the Buddha was taking as well as the motivation with which he was inspired.

Following the Council of Vaiśālī, certain dissident monks held separate meetings which were known as Mahāsaṃgītis. Among the reproaches with which the Sinhalese chronicle of the Dīpavaṃsa addressed those monks, the following complaint can be found: "Not knowing what should not be taken literally (*pariyāyadesita*) nor what should be taken literally (*nippariyāyadesita*), not distinguishing the precise meaning (*nītattha*) from the meaning to be determined (*neyyattha*), those monks attribute to what is said with a particular intention (*sandhāya bhaṇita*) another meaning (than the true one) and hence, by respecting the letter (*byañjanacchāyāya*), they destroy a large part of the meaning (*bahu atthaṃ vināsayuṃ*)[41]."

The third refuge prescribes taking as one's guide the meaning and not the letter, *nītārtha*- and not *neyārthasotras*: "The Bodhisattva who resorts to the meaning and not to the letter penetrates all the enigmatic words of the Bhagavat Buddhas[42]." – "The Bodhisattva who has put his faith and confidence in the Tathāgata, trusting his word exclusively, resorts to the sūtra the meaning of which is precise and not to the sūtra the meaning of which has to be determined. By resorting to the sūtra the meaning of which is precise, he cannot deviate from the Buddhist Doctrine and Discipline. Indeed, in the sūtra the meaning of which has to be determined, the interpretation of the meaning which is diffused in several directions is uncertain and causes hesitation and, if the Bodhisattva does not adhere exclusively to the sūtra which is precise in meaning, he might deviate from the Buddhist Doctrine and Discipline[43]."

However, when the interpreter is certain of having grasped the meaning thanks to the *nītārtha* sūtras, it will profit him greatly to ponder over the enigmatic words of the Buddha which are also an integral part of the Saddharma and constitute a method of teaching (*deśanānaya*) controlled by skilful means, but

the end and aim (*svasiddhānta*) of which consist of a personal comprehension (*adhigama*) of the undefiled element (*anāsravadhātu*) which is superior to phrases and syllables[44]. In order to make use of this method of teaching and to understand the enigmatic words, it is important to discover the point of view which inspired the Buddha.

The Treatise by Nāgārjuna (I, pp. 26–46) lists four points of view (*siddhānta*), only the last of which is absolute (*paramārthi – ka*); the other three pertain to relative or conventional (*saṃvṛti*) truth. The Buddha did not restrict himself to exactness of wording when expressing himself: 1. From the worldly point of view (*laukikasiddhānta*), he often adopted the current idiom and did not hesitate to speak in terms of beings (*sattva*) who die and go to be reborn in the five destinies (e.g. Dīgha, I, p. 82); he extolled the role of the single person (*ekapudgala*) who is born into the world for the joy, happiness and benefit of the many (Aṅguttara, I, p. 22). – 2. From the personal point of view (*prātipauruṣika – siddhānta*), the Buddha often tried to adapt his teaching to the intellectual and moral dispositions (*āśaya*) of his listeners. To those who did not believe in the afterlife but believed everything disappears at death, he discoursed on immortality and predicted a fruition in different universes (Aṅguttara, I, p. 134); to Phalguna, who believed in the eternity of the self, he taught the non-existence of a person as a thinking and fruition-incurring being (Saṃyutta, II, p. 13). This might be said to be a contradiction, it is however not the least so but merely skilful means (*upāya*). – 3. From the remedial point of view (*prātipākṣikasiddhānta*), the Buddha who is the healer of universal suffering varied the remedies according to the diseases to be cured; to the sensuous (*rāgacarita*), he taught the contemplation of a decomposing corpse (*aśubhabhāvanā*); to vindictive and hate-filled men (*dveṣacarita*), he recommended thoughts of goodwill (*maitrīcitta*) regarding those close to one; to the deluded (*mohacarita*), he advised study on the subject of Dependent Origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*). We should never forget that the omniscient Buddha is less a teacher of philosophy and more a healer of universal suffering: he imparts to every person the teaching which suits them best.

Scholars have attempted to classify the intentions and motivations which guided the Buddha in his teaching[45]. They counted four intentions (*abhiprāya*; in Tib., *dgoṅs pa*; in Chinese, *i ch'u*) and four motivations (*abhisaṃdhi*; in Tib., *ldem por dgoṅs pa*; in Chinese, *pi mi*); However, since the two lists overlap, it is preferable, for ease of explanation, to review them together:

A person who might be tempted to feel some scorn for the Buddha (*buddhe 'vajñā*) is informed by the latter that, long ago, he was the Buddha Vipasvin and fully enlightened (*aham eva sa tena kālena Vipaśvī samyaksaṃbuddho 'bhūvam*). Obviously, the present Buddha Śākyamuni is not the Buddha Vipaśvin of the past, but he resembles him in all points because both Buddhas participate in the same Body of the Doctrine (*dharmakāya*). By expressing himself in that way, the Buddha meant to put out the similarity (*samatābhiprāya*).

The literal interpretation of the texts (*yathārutārthagrāha*) does not lead to a comprehension of the Dharma but, in fact, is equal to scorning the Doctrine (*dharme 'vajñā*). The Buddha therefore teaches that one should have served Buddhas as numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges in order to arrive at an understanding of the Mahāyāna (*iyato Gaṅganadīvalukāsamānabuddhān paryupāsya mahāyāne 'vabodha utpadyate*). This is hyperbole since, in order to understand the Mahāyāna, it is not necessary to have served an infinite number of Buddhas; nevertheless, prolonged effort is required. Here, the intention of the Buddha is to speak of another thing (*arthāntarābhiprāya*).

The lazy (*kusīda*) who do not resolutely practise the means of deliverance are told by the Buddha that those who make an aspiration with a view to the Blissful Abode will go to be reborn there (*ye sukhāvatyāṃ praṇidhānaṃ kariṣyanti te tatropapatsyance*). In reality, matters are more complicated but every effort, however minimal, will have its recompense "later". Here, the Buddha is referring to another time (*kālāntarābhiprāya*).

A virtuous action which is praiseworthy in a beginner appears insufficient on the part of an adherent who is more advanced in perfection. In order to combat satisfaction in mediocrity (*alpasaṃtuṣṭi*), it happens that the Buddha blames a virtue in one person which he has just praised in another (*yat tad eva kuśalamūlaṃ kasyacid praśaṃsate kasyacid vigarhate*): here he is taking into account the dispositions of each individual (*pudgalāśayābhiprāya*).

In order to cure the sensuous (*rāgacarita*), the Buddha depicts the splendours of the Buddha-fields to them; so as to discomfit the proud (*mānacarita*), he describes the supreme perfection of the Buddhas; he encourages those who are tortured by remorse (*kaukṛtya*) by telling them that those who have committed offences against the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will indeed end by going to the heavens (*ye buddhabodhisattveṣv apakāram kariṣyanti te sarve svargopagā bhaviṣyanti*). Such declarations should obviously not be taken seriously, but interpreted as is appropriate in the light of sūtras of precise meaning.

Furthermore, and not necessarily intentionally, the Buddha sometimes cultivated paradox and plays on words: this is innocent amusement and not reason for complaint. Some extracts taken from the Mahāyānasaṃgraha (II, pp. 224–31) are sufficient to illustrate these stylistic methods:

"The Bodhisattva," it says, "practises alms-giving extensively when he does not give anything." It should be understood that the Bodhisattva does not give anything, because he identifies himself mentally with all those who give, because he has already given away everything he possessed and, finally, because he practises the triply pure giving, in which no distinction is made between the donor, beneficiary and thing given. – "The Bodhisattva," it says further, "is the supreme slayer of living beings (*prāṇātipātin*)." A fanciful etymology informs us that the Bodhisatva is a *prāṇātipātin* insofar as *prāṇ* [*inaḥ saṃcārato*] '*tipātayati*, that is, he "cuts beings off from the round of rebirths" by ensuring their Nirvāṇa. – Another śāstra dares to claim that the profound attributes of the Buddha correlate with craving (*ràga*), hatred (*dveṣa*) and delusion (*moha*). This

is not blasphemy but a profound truth, since all beings, involved as they are with passion, are basically identical to the Buddha and destined to win supreme and perfect Enlightenment.

IV. Direct knowledge (*jñāna*) is the refuge and not discursive consciousness (*vijñāna*). – This last exegetical principle, which summarises the previous three, shows that sound hermeneutics are not based on a literal though theoretical understanding of the Noble Truths, but on direct knowledge. Here again, the best commentary is supplied by the Bodhisattvabhūmi: "The Bodhisattva attaches great importance to the knowledge of the direct comprehension (of the Truths), and not to mere discursive consciousness of the letter or the meaning, which (consciousness) arises from listening and reflecting. Understanding that what should be known through knowledge arising from meditation cannot be recognised only through discursive consciousness arising from listening and reflecting, he abstains from rejecting or denying the teachings given by the Tathāgata, profound as they are[46]."

The Buddhist Truths which the exegeticist seeks to penetrate can be the object of a threefold wisdom, or Prajñā arising from listening (*śrutamayī*), reflecting (*cintāmayī*) or meditation (*bhāvanāmayī*).

The first two are worldly (*laukika*) and defiled (*sāsrava*) discursive consciousnesses (*vijñāna*) since, in their empiricism, they remain defiled by craving, hatred and delusion. *Śrutamayī* Prajñā which is incurred by oral teaching accepts the Truths on faith and is founded on confidence in the words of the Buddha; it is this which caused Sīha (in Aṅguttara, IV, p. 82) to say: "That alms-giving bears fruit here below I do not believe, I know; but that the giver is reborn in heaven, I believe from the Buddha." The object of that wisdom is the word (*nāman*) or the letter, such as it was expounded by the Buddha. – *Cintāmayī* Prajñā, which follows the preceding, is a personal and reasoned understanding of the Truths the meaning (*artha*) of which it grasps and not just the letter. Basing themselves on these, the monks which the Majjhima (I, p. 265) presents can declare: "If we say this or that, it is not through respect for the Master, but because we ourselves have recognised, seen and understood it."

These first two types of Prajñā, which are dialectical in nature, remain blemished by delusion; they are practised as a preparatory exercise (*prayoga*) by worldlings (*pṛthagjana*) who are not yet committed to the Path of Nirvāṇa. They are of only provisional value and are meant to be rejected after use. The Mahāvibhāṣā (T 1545, ch. 42, p. 217 c; ch. 81, p. 420a) and the Abhidharmakośa (VI, p. 143) compare the first to a swimming aid which is constantly gripped by a man who does not know how to swim; the second, to the same aid which is sometimes used and at other times disregarded by a poor swimmer. Whoever possesses the third Prajñā, wisdom arising from meditation (*bhāvanāmayī*), is like a strong swimmer who crosses the river without any point of support.

Bhāvanāmayī Prajña is no longer discursive consciousness (*vijñāna*) but authentic knowledge (*jñāna*), a direct comprehension of the Truths (*satyābhisamaya*); being free from any hint of delusion, it is transcendental (*lokottara*)

and undefiled (*anāsrava*). Its sudden acquisition marks the entry into the Path of Nirvāṇa and confers on the ascetic the quality of holy one (*ārya*). That holy one, during the stage of training (*śaikṣa*) which continues throughout the path of meditation (*bhāvanāmārga*), successively eliminates all the categories of passions which can still coexist with undefiled Prajñā; however, it will finally lead him to Arhatship where the holy one, having no more in which to train (*aśaikṣa*), enjoys Nirvāṇa on earth because he knows that his impurities have been destroyed (*āsravakṣayajñāna*) and that they will not arise again (*anutpādajñāna*).

We can, as did L. de La Vallée Poussin[47], take it as certain that Buddhist Prajñā is not a gnosis, a vague apperception of a transcendental reality, as is, for the monists and pantheists of the Vedānta and Brāhminism, the knowledge of the absolute brahman and the consciousness of the identity of the "I" with the brahman. Prajñā has as its object the eternal laws of the Dependent Origination of phenomena (*pratītyasamutpāda*), and their general marks: impermanence, suffering, impersonality and emptiness; finally, the affirmation of Nirvāṇa. Having been prepared through faith and reflection, undefiled Prajñā transcends them with its sharpness (*paṭutva*) and attains its object direcly. It constitutes the single and indispensable instrument of true exegesis.

From this brief survey, we derive the impression that the Buddhist scholars spared themselves no trouble in order to maintain intact and correctly interpret the extremely varied teachings of Śākyamuni. They were not content with memorising their letter (*vyañjana*), and they were intent on grasping the meaning (*artha*) through a rational approach. The distinction which they established between texts with a precise meaning (*nītārtha*) and texts with a meaning to be determined (*neyārtha*) is, more often than not, perfectly justified. Even while allowing faith and reflection their due place, they accepted the priority of undefiled Prajñā, that direct knowledge which attains its object in all lucidity. We cannot, therefore, accept, as does a certain critic, that as from the first Buddhist Council "a continual process of divergence from the original doctrine of the Teacher is evident[48]"; on the contrary, we are of the opinion that the Buddhist Doctrine evolved along the lines which its discoverer had unconsciously traced for it.

Notes

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1 *India Antiqua*, Leiden, 1947, pp. 213–22, Eng. transln in BSR 1, 1, pp. 4–15.

2 Cf. Abhidharmakośavyākhyā, p. 704: *Catvārīmāni bhikṣavaḥ pratisaraṇāni. katamāni catvāri. dharmaḥ pratisaraṇaṃ na pudgalaḥ, arthaḥ pratisaraṇaṃ na vyañjanam, nītārthaṃ sūtraṃ pratisaraṇaṃ na neyārtham. jñānaṃ pratisaraṇaṃ na vijñānam*; in other recensions, the order often differs.

3 Cf. Majjhima, I, p. 265: *Nanu bhikkhave yad eva tumhākaṃ sāmaṃ ñātaṃ sāmaṃ diṭṭhaṃ sāmaṃ viditaṃ tad eva tumhe vadethā ti.*

4 Bodh. bhūmi, p. 257: *Sa evaṃ yuktipratisarаṇo na pudgalapratisaraṇas tattvārthān na vicalaty aparapratyayaś ca bhavati dharmeṣu.* Ibidem, p. 108: *na parapratyayo bhavati teṣu yuktiparīkṣiteṣu dharmeṣu.*

5 Bodh. bhūmi, p. 108: *Kiṃcit punar adhimucyamāno yeṣv asya dharmeṣu gambhīreṣu buddhir na gāhate, tathāgatagocarā ete dharmā nāsmadbuddhigocarā ity evam apratikṣipaṃs tān dharmān, ātmānam akṣataṃ cānupahataṃ ca pariharaty anavadyam.*

6 Sūtrāl., p. 138: *Ārṣadharmādhimuktito na praṇaśyati.*

7 Saṃyutta, IV, p. 281.

8 Ibidem, p. 297.

9 Saṃyutta, V, p. 430: *Idaṃ dukkhaṃ ti bhikkave tatham etam avitatham etam anaññatatham etam ... tatha aparimāṇā vaṇṇā aparimāṇā saṃkāsanā itipidaṃ dukkhaṃ ariyasaccaṃ.*

10 Sūtrāl., p. 82: *Svarthaḥ saṃvṛtiparamārthasatyayogāt, suvyañjanaḥ pratītapadavyañjanatvāt.*

11 Dīgha, III, p. 129: *Ayaṃ kho āyasmā atthaṃ ñeva sammā gaṇhāti, vyañjanāni sammā ropeti.*

12 Ibidem, p. 129: *Lābhā no āvuso, suladdhaṃ no āvuso, ye mayaṃ āyasmantaṃ tādisaṃ sabrahmacāriṃ passāma evaṃ atthūpetaṃ vyañjanūpetan ti.*

13 Ibidem, p. 129: *Imesaṃ nu kho āvuso vyañjanānaṃ ayaṃ vā attho eso vā attho, katamo opāyikataro ti.*

14 Ibidem, p. 129: *Imassa nu kho āvuso atthassa imāni vā vyañjanāni etāni vā vyañjanāni, katamāni opāyikatarānī ti.*

15 Aṅguttara, II, p. 139: *N'ev' atthato no vyañjanato pariyādānaṃ gacchati.*

16 Ibidem, p. 138: *Dhammakathiko bahuñ ca bhāsati sahitañ ca, parisā ca kusalā hoti sahitāsahitassa.*

17 Bodh. bhūmi, p. 106: *Yathākramaṃ padavyañjanam uddiśati, yathākramoddiṣaṃ ca padavyañjanaṃ yathākramam evārthato vibhajati.*

18 Aṅguttara, III, p. 381–3; IV, pp. 221–3: *Anisaṃsā kālena dhammasavane kālena atthupaparikkhāya.*

19 cf. Milindapañha, p. 18.

20 Majjhima, I, p. 133: *Idha bhikkhave ekacce moghapurisā dhammaṃ pariyāpuṇanti, suttaṃ, geyyaṃ ...; te taṃ dhammaṃ pariyāpuṇitvā tesaṃ dhammānaṃ paññāya atthaṃ na upaparikkhanti, tesaṃ te dhammā paññāya atthaṃ anupaparikkhataṃ na nijjhānaṃ khamanti, te upārambhānisaṃsā c'eva dhammaṃ pariyāpuṇanti itivādappamokkhānisaṃsā ca, yassa c'atthāya dhammaṃ pariyāpuṇanti tañ c'assa atthaṃ nānubhonti, tesaṃ te dhammā duggahītā dīgharattaṃ ahitāya dukkhāya saṃvattanti. Taṃ kissa hetu. Duggahītittā bhikkhave dhammānaṃ.*

21 Aṅguttara, II, p. 147; III, p. 178: *Duggahītaṃ suttantaṃ pariyāpuṇanti dunnikkhittehi padavyañjanehi.*

22 Ibidem: *Saddhammassa saṃmosāya antardhānāya saṃvattanti.*

23 Nettipakaraṇa, p. 21: *Dunnikkhittassa padavyañjanassa attho pi dunnayo bhavati.*

24 Cf. Vinaya, I, p. 40.

25 Ibidem: *Hotu āvuso, appaṃ vā bahuṃ vā bhāsassu, atthaṃ yeva me brūhi, atthen' eva me attho, kiṃ kāhasi vyañjanaṃ bahun ti.*

26 Laṅkāvatāra, p. 196.

27 Vasumitra in J. Masuda, 'Origin and Doctrines of Indian Buddhist Schools', *Asia Major*, II, 1925, pp. 19 and 28. See also M. Walleser, *Die Sekten dẹs alten Buddhismus*, Heidelberg, 1927, p. 27.

28 Chung a han, T 26, ch. 11, p. 498 b 10.

29 Aṅguttara, I, p. 22.

30 Cf. J. Masuda, *loc. cit.*, p. 52; M. Walleser, *loc. cit.*, p. 43.

31 *Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse*, II, Louvain, 1949, p. 1074.
32 Ibidem, p. 1095.
33 Quoted in Śikṣāsamuccaya, p. 95: *Sūkṣmaṃ hi Mañjuśrih saddharmapratikṣepakarmāvāraṇam. yo hi kaścin Mañjuśrís tathāgatabhāṣite dharme kasmiṃścic chobanasaṃjñāṃ karoti kvacid aśobhanasaṃjñāṃ sa saddharmaṃ pratikṣipati tena saddharmaṃ pratikṣipatā tathāgato 'bhyākhyāto bhavati dharmaḥ pratikṣipto bhavati saṃgho 'pa vadito bhavati.*
34 Quoted in Madh. vṛtti, p. 43
35 Samādhirājasūtra, ed. N. Dutt, *Gilgit Manuscripts*, II, p. 78; also quoted in Madh. vṛtti, pp. 44, 276: *Nītārthasūtrāntaviśeṣa jānati yathopadiṣṭā Sugatena śūnyatā, yasmin punaḥ pudgalasattvapuruṣā neyārthato jānati sarvadharmān.*
36 cf. Kośa, III, p. 75.
37 On the Bhārahārasūtra, see Saṃyutta, III, pp. 25–6; Kośavyākhyā, p. 706; Sūtrāl., p. 159.
38 Cf. Kośa, IX, p. 256.
39 Cf. Madh. avatāra, pp. 181–94.
40 V. Bhattacharya, 'Sandhābhāṣā', IHQ, IV, 1928, pp. 287–96; P. C. Bagchi, 'The Sandhābhāṣā and Sandhāvacana'. IHQ, VI, 1930, pp. 389–96; P. Pelliot, in *Toung Pao*, 1932, p. 147; P. C. Bagchi, 'Some Aspects of Buddhist Mysticism in the Caryāpadas, *Cal. Or. Ser.*, I, No. 5, 1934; J. R. Ware, JAOS, vol. 57, p. 123; F. Edgerton, JAOS, vol. 57, pp. 185–8; L. de La Valiée Poussin, 'Buddhica', JHAS, iii, pp. 137–9.
41 Dīpavaṃsa, V, 30–5.
42 Bodh. bhūmi, p. 108: *Arthaṃ pratisaran bodhisattvo na vyañjanaṃ buddhānāṃ bhagavatāṃ sarvasaṃdhāyavacanāny anupraviśati*
43 Bodh. bhūmi, p. 257: *Bodhisattvas tathāgate niviṣṭaśraddho niviṣṭaprasāda ekāntiko vacasy abhiprasannas tathāgatanltārthaṃ sūtraṃ pratisarati na neyārtham. nītārthaṃ sūtraṃ pratisarann asaṃhāryo bhavaty asmād dharmavinayāt, tathā hi neyārthasya sūtrasya nānāmukhaprakṛtārthavibhāgo 'niścitaḥ samdehakāro bhavati. sacet punar bodhisattvaḥ nītārthe 'pi sūtre 'naikāntikaḥ syād evam asau saṃhāryaḥ syād asmād dharmavinayāt.*
44 On the contrast between *deśanānaya* and *siddhāntanaya*, see Laṅkāvatāra, pp. 148, 172, etc.
45 Cf. Mahāvyutpatti, Nos. 1666–75; Sūtrāl., pp. 82–4; *La Somme du Grand Vēhicule*, II, pp. 129–32.
46 Bodh. bhūmi, p. 257: *Punar bodhisattvaḥ adhigamajñāne sāradarśī bhavati na śrutacintādharmārthavijñānamātrake. sa yad bhāvanāmayena jñānena jñātavyaṃ na tac chakyaṃ śrutacintājñānamātrakeṇa vijñātum iti viditvā paramagambhīrān api tathāgatabhāṣitān dharmān śrutvā na pratikṣipati nāpavadati.*
47 L. de La Vallée Poussin, *La Morale bouddhique*, Paris, 1927, p. 302.
48 J. C. Jennings, *The Vedantic Buddhism of the Buddha*, Oxford, 1947.

13

RELIGIOUS SUICIDE IN EARLY BUDDHISM*

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Whether of religious inspiration or not, suicide is hardly the usual theme of an academic lecture. To the Western mind it is a troublesome subject. We are none too sure whether it is a matter of morality, psychiatry or both, and should a thought of suicidal tendency chance to arise in our mind, we hurriedly swerve away from it by means of a simple auto-defensive reflex. And who would blame us?

Easterners in general and Buddhists in particular consider the problem more calmly, and with that sense of the relative which is characteristic of them.

Let us leaf through their voluminous treatises on morality and stop at the following passage[1]:

> If a monk, with deliberate intent, takes with his own hands the life of a human being or anything resembling a human being, if he himself gives him a weapon and tells him to kill himself; if he praises death to him; if for example he says to him, 'Fie on you! What good does this miserable life do you? Far better to die than live', in such a way that the other conceives in his heart a delight in dying; if in these various fashions he tells him to die or praises death to him, and later that man, because of this, dies, that monk is blameworthy of a very grave offence and should be excluded from the Community.

The text is conclusive, you would say: Buddhists, in the name of their morality, condemn suicide. No! They prohibit an instigation to suicide, but leave each person free to end his own days. For them morality only rules our behaviour in relation to others, but does not impose on us any duty with regard to ourselves. When Buddhist morality prohibits murder, theft, sensual misconduct, ill-will and false views, this is because these bodily, vocal and mental misdeeds are harmful to others. As to the rest, each acts according to his understanding.

The sage Nāgārjuna explains[2]:

> According to the Treatise on Discipline, suicide is not murder. Fault and merit result respectively from a wrong done to others or the good done to others. It is not by caring for one's own body or killing one's own body that one acquires merit or commits a misdeed.

However, if suicide is not a moral fault properly speaking, it is nonetheless a conscious and voluntary action, subject as such to the law of Karma, that is, the fruition of actions. Good or bad, every human action is vitiated by desire and by the triple poison of greed, hatred and delusion. Every action brings in its wake a fruit of fruition to be gathered in the present existence or in future existences: pleasant fruit if the action is good, unpleasant if the action is bad. Good or bad, our actions draw us into the round of rebirth, into the world of rebecoming, an unpleasant world since it is unstable and subject to perpetual change.

The desire which vitiates action should be understood in its widest meaning: 1. the thirst for pleasure – a desire which wakens and takes root when faced with agreeable objects and pleasant ideas: 2. the thirst for existence – a desire associated with the belief in the continued enduring of existence; 3. the thirst for annihilation – a desire associated with the belief that everythings ends with death.

The desperate person who takes his own life obviously aspires to annihilation: his suicide, instigated by desire, will not omit him from fruition, and he will have to partake of the fruit of his action. In the case of the ordinary man, suicide is a folly and does not achieve the intended aim.

In contrast, suicide is justified in the persons of the Noble Ones who have already cut off desire and by so doing neutralised their actions by making them incapable of producing further fruit of fruition.

From the point of view of Early Buddhism, suicide is a normal matter in the case of the Noble Ones who, having completed their work, sever their last link with the world and voluntarily pass into Nirvāṇa, thus definitively escaping from the world of rebirths, This is the first form of suicide, which I would call suicide through disgust for the world.

I

The Noble Ones who normally practise this are the Buddhas, Pratyekabuddhas and Arhats.

The Buddhas are those fully and perfectly enlightened beings who, having acquired omniscience, expound the Buddhist Doctrine to mankind. The Pratyekabuddhas also understand perfectly the mechanism of cause and effect but, through fear of exhausting themselves uselessly, they do not teach. As for the Arhats, in the main these are disciples of the Buddha who, basing themselves on the Master's teaching, understand the general characteristics of phenomena: impermanence, suffering and impersonality, and who, owing to this wisdom, have eliminated the delusions and passions which attached them to the world.

Very often these Noble Ones, to whichever category they belong, take their

own lives when they consider they have done what had to be done. Fully lucid, they pass into Nirvāṇa like a flame which is extinguished through lack of fuel. They will not be seen again by gods or men.

The last Buddha to appear in the world was Śākyamuni. He was born in India about 566 B.C. At the age of twenty-nine, he left home to take up the life of a religious mendicant. Six years later he reached enlightenment and thus became a Buddha. He taught the Buddhist Truths for forty-five years. Finally, in 486 B.C., when he was eighty years old, he entered Nirvāṇa.

This death or, if you prefer, this disappearance was voluntary. One day in Vaiśālī he declared[3]:

'Today my disciples are instructed, formed and intelligent; they will be able to refute all their adversaries, and the pure conduct I have taught is wide-spread throughout the whole world. Three months from today I shall enter Nirvāṇa'. Having said this, he threw off his vital forces (*āyusaṅkhāraṃ ossaji*).

Three months later, at the hour he had fixed, he reached the town of Kuśinagara and had his death-bed prepared in the Sāla Grove. There he lay down on his right side, with his head turned to the north. He entered the first absorption, and from one absorption to the next, went up to the ninth. The monks gathered around him thought him to be dead, as this absorption is a cataleptic state devoid of consciousness and feeling. However, he came down to the fourth, a state of consciousness and perfect lucidity. From there he passed into Nirvāṇa[4].

The Pratyekabuddhas are inferior to the Buddhas, but their deaths are often more spectacular. When Śākyamuni entered his mother's womb, five hundred Pratyekabuddhas were assembled in the Deer Park, present-day Sārnāth, a few kilometres from Vārāṇasī. The appearance of a Buddha meant their stay here in this world was superfluous. They rose into the air to the height of seven palm trees and, having attained the fire-element, burned themselves up. Then, like extinguished torches, they entered complete Nirvāṇa. Whatever they had in the way of bile and phlegm, fibres and nerves, bones, flesh and blood, all completely disappeared, consumed by the fire. Their pure relics alone fell to earth[5].

On the decease of the Buddha, a great number of Arhats passed into Nirvāṇa with him. This was not through grief or despair but because they had understood that everything that is born must perish. The majority of them abandoned their bodies in mountains and forests, in gorges and ravines, near water courses and streams. Some, like the royal swans, took flight and disappeared into space[6].

These are out of the ordinary deaths, making use of supernormal powers. The latter are not within the reach of everyone. We know from the canonical texts that certain disciples of the Buddha, who were already Arhats or on the point of becoming so, took their lives by quite ordinary means: the rope or the knife.

The suicide of Vālkali is so characteristic it deserves to be told in full[7].

Vālkali was a young brahmin from Śrāvastī who assiduously devoted himself to the study of the Vedas, the sacred books of Brahminism. One day he met the Buddha Śākyamuni and was so struck by his splendour and majesty that he could not take his eyes off him. Giving up the privileges of his caste, he entered

the Buddhist Order so as to be always at the Master's side. Apart from meal and bath time he never stopped gazing at him. This assiduity ended by making the Buddha tired: one day, at the end of the rainy season, he dismissed Vālkali and suggested he go elsewhere. Deeply upset, Vālkali went to the Vulture Peak mountain while the Buddha remained at the Bamboo Grove in Rājagṛha.

One day, however, the Buddha recalled his disciple. Overjoyed, the latter was hurrying at the invitation when, on the way, he was taken ill and had to stop at the Potter's House in Rājagṛha. He said to his companions: 'Please go, Venerable Sirs, to the Blessed One and, in my name, prostrate yourselves at his feet. Tell him that Vālkali is sick, suffering and greatly weakened. It would be good if the Blessed One, through pity for him, were to come here.'

Vālkali's colleagues therefore went to the Buddha and transmitted the message. As was his wont, the Buddha consented by remaining silent. The next day, he dressed, took his begging bowl and his cloak and went to the sick man. The latter, seeing the Master from afar, became restless on his couch. The Master approached and said to him: 'Do not move, Vālkali, there are seats quite near and I shall sit there.' Having sat down, he went on: 'Friend, is it tolerable? Is it viable? Are the painful feelings you are experiencing on the decrease and not on the increase?'

'No, Master,' replied Vālkali, 'it is neither tolerable nor viable. The painful feelings are on the increase and not on the decrease.'

'Then have you some regret and some remorse?'

'Yes, Master,' confessed Vālkali, 'I have much regret and much remorse.'

'Does your conscience reproach you for something from the moral point of view?'

'No, my conscience does not reproach me for anything from the moral point of view.'

'And yet,' stated the Buddha, 'you have regret and remorse.'

'This is because for a long time I have wanted to go and look at the Master, but I do not find the strength in my body to do it.'

'For shame, Vālkali' cried the Buddha, 'What good would it do you to see my body of filth. Vālkali, whoever sees my Doctrine, sees me; whoever sees me sees my Doctrine. And what is my Doctrine?

'The phenomena of existence: form, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness, which we call a Self, are not a Self and do not belong to a Self. These aggregates are transitory, and that which is transitory is painful. That which is transitory, painful and subject to change does not merit either desire, love or affection. Seeing in this way, the Noble One is disgusted with the body, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness. Being disgusted, he is detached from them. As a result of that detachment he is delivered. Being delivered he obtains this knowledge: "I am delivered", and he discovers this: "I have understood the Noble Truths, destroyed rebirths, lived the pure life and accomplished my duty; there will henceforth be no new births for me.'

Having spoken thus, the Buddha went to the Vulture Peak, while Vālkali had

himself carried to the Black Rock on the Seers' Mount. During the night two deities warned the Buddha that Vālkali was thinking of liberating himself and that, once liberated, he would be delivered.

The Buddha despatched some monks to Vālkali to tell him: 'Blameless will be your death, blameless the end of your days.'

'Return to the Master,' said Vālkali, 'and in my name prostrate yourselves at his feet. Be sure and tell him that I no longer feel any doubt regarding the transitory, painful and unstable nature of all the phenomena of existence.'

The monks had hardly left when Vālkali 'took the knife' (*satthaṃ āharesi*) and killed himself. The Buddha, being doubtful about this, immediately went to the Black Rock in the company of several disciples. Vālkali lay dying on his couch, his shoulders turned to the right, for it is thus that the Noble Ones die'. A cloud of black dust moved around him.

'Do you see, O Monks,' the Buddha asked, 'that cloud of dust which is drifting in all directions around the corpse? It is Māra the Malign One who is seeking the whereabouts of Vālkali's consciousness. But Vālkali's consciousness is nowhere: Vālkali is in complete Nirvāṇa.'

Hence the Noble Ones who have triumphed over delusion and eliminated passion can, once their task is done, speed the hour of deliverance by voluntarily taking their own lives. Whatever the means used, act of will, recourse to the supernormal, or quite simply the rope or knife, their suicide is *apāpika* 'blameless'[8].

II

Another form of voluntary death is the giving of life, commonly undertaken by the Bodhisattvas or future Buddhas. Correctly speaking, a Bodhisattva is not a Noble One since he has not entirely eliminated delusion and passion. He has, however, made an aspiration one day to reach supreme and perfect enlightenment which leads to Buddhahood in order to devote himself to the welfare and happiness of all beings.

To reach Buddhahood, the Bodhisattva has to go through a long career. For countless existences over three, seven or thirty-three incalculable periods, he has to practise the perfect virtues and thus acquire the mass of merits needed to become a Buddha. These perfect virtues, or perfections, are giving, morality, patience, vigour, concentration and wisdom.

The first of these virtues is giving: the Bodhisattva is above all else an altruist, and his generosity knows no limits. He gives unstintingly his goods, riches, wife, children, blood, flesh, eyes, head and whole body.

In the course of his previous lives, he who was one day to become the Buddha Śākyamuni boundlessly multiplied his deeds of generosity. A great deal of literature is devoted to them: this is the literature known as the Jātakas or 'Stories of Previous Lives'.

Giving of the body, – In the person of Mahāsattva, a prince of the Pañcalas,

the Bodhisattva, seeing a starving tigress on the point of devouring her young ones, made her a gift of his body[9].

Giving of flesh. – When he was the king Śibi, the Bodhisattva, seeing a pigeon being pursued by a falcon, undertook to redeem the bird. He cut from his thigh a piece of flesh equal in weight to the pigeon's. When it was weighed the pigeon always turned out to be heavier than the weight of the severed flesh and, to account for this, the compassionate king ended by cutting up the whole of his body into pieces[10].

Giving of eyes. – The same king Śibi tore out his eyes in order to give sight to a blind brahmin[11].

Giving of the head. – King Candragarbha is famous for his generosity. The brahmin Raudrākṣa came and asked for his head. The ministers implored him to accept a head made of precious substances instead, but the brahmin refused to accept. The king attached his hair to a tree and cut off his head himself in order to offer it to the brahmin[12].

These charitable deeds performed by the future Buddha were commemorated, on the very spots where they occurred, by sumptuous funerary monuments: the four great stūpas of Northern India. Chinese pilgrims who went to India did not fail to visit them: Fa-hsien about the year 400, Sung Yun in approximately 520 and Hsüan-tsang about 630. Their exact location have been precisely determined by archaeologists. The giving of the head would explain the name of Takṣaśilā, 'cut rock', for Takṣaśira, 'cut head', given to the great town in North-West India, well-known to the Greek historians and geographers by the name of Taxila.

Altruism, the spirit of solidarity, is one of the elements that caused, around the beginning of the Christian era, the blossoming of a Buddhist revival which, in opposition to the early Buddhism known as the Small Vehicle (Hīnayāna), assumed the grandiose title of Great Vehicle (Mahāyāna). A new ideal inspired its adherents. It was less a matter of winning holiness and acceding to Nirvāṇa, as the earlier disciples of the Buddha required, than reproducing in one's everyday life the charitable deeds of a Bodhisattva, solely concerned with the welfare of others. Henceforth charity took precedence over everything else. Any bodily, vocal or mental action became permissible as long as it was favourable to beings. Giving is perfect, transceniental, when whoever gives, inspired by supreme wisdom, no longer distinguishes between donor, beneficiary and the thing given.

III

Alongside the Noble Ones who hastened their death when they had done what they had to do, alongside the Bodhisattvas who gave their life for beings, there were also Buddhists who attempted suicide in order to pay homage to the Buddha and his Doctrine. This third form of suicide was generally carried out by auto-cremation.

The Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra or 'Lotus of the Good Doctrine', which was translated into Chinese towards the end of the third century, relates the following legend[13]:

In bygone days, innumerable cosmic periods ago, the Buddha Candrasūrya appeared in the world. He expounded the 'Lotus of the Good Doctrine' at length to a great assembly of Disciples and Bodhisattvas, beginning with the Bodhisattva Priyadarśana. Under the teaching of the Buddha, Priyadarśana applied himself to the practice of difficult tasks. He spent twelve thousand years wandering, exclusively engaged in meditation on the 'Lotus' through the development of intense application. He thus acquired the supernormal power of being voluntarily able to manifest all forms. Gladdened, delighted, overjoyed and filled with joy, satisfaction and pleasure, he had the following thought: 'Supposing I were to pay homage (*pūjā*) to the Blessed Lord Buddha and the 'Lotus of the Good Doctrine' which he has taught me?' He immediately put into action the power which he possessed to manifest all forms and, from on high, caused a shower of blossoms and perfumes to fall. The nature of those essences was such that a single gramme of those perfumes was worth the whole universe.

However, on further reflection, this homage seemed inadequate to him. 'The spectacle of my supernormal power,' he said to himself, 'is not likely to honour the Blessed Lord Buddha as much as would the abandoning of my own body. Thereupon Priyadarśana began to eat Agaru (aloe), incense and olibanum, and to drink Campaka (castor-oil). He thus spent twelve years in ceaselessly and constantly partaking of inflammable substances. At the end of those twelve years, Priyadarśana, having clothed his body in heavenly garments and sprinkled it with scented oils, made his benedictory aspiration and then burnt his body, in order to honour the Buddha Candrasūrya and the discourse of the 'Lotus of the Good Doctrine'.

Universes as numerous as the sands of the eighty Ganges were illuminated by the splendour of the flames thrown off by the blazing body of the Bodhisattva Priyadarśana. The Buddhas who were in those universes all expressed their approval: 'Excellent, excellent, O son of good family! This is the true homage due to the Buddha; this is the homage due to the Doctrine. This is the most distinguished, the foremost, the best, the most eminent, the most perfect of homages paid to the Doctrine, this homage which is paid to it by abandoning one's own body.'

Twelve hundred years went by, while the body of Priyadarśana continued to burn. Finally, at the end of those twelve hundred years, the fire stopped.

This sacrifice was repeated by the Bodhisattva Priyadarśana through the ages in various forms. He is, at present, the Bodhisattva Bhaiṣajyarāja, 'King of Medicinal Plants', in our universe.

Priyadarśana's feat would doubtless seem to us more admirable than imitable; anyway, the methods used for burning for twelve hundred years are not within our reach. We do not know to what degree his example was followed in India. We only know through a seventh century witness that religious suicides were common at that time[14]:

> [In India] an action such as burning the body is regarded usually as the mode of showing inward sincerity ... In the River Ganges many men drown themselves everyday. On the hill of Buddhagayā too there are not unfrequently cases of suicide. Some starve themselves to death and eat nothing. Others climb up trees and throw themselves down.... Some intentionally destroy their manhood and become eunuchs.

Little can be gathered from such vague information. In contrast in China, where the 'Lotus of the Good Doctrine' (Hua yën ching) was highly successful, Priyadarśana's example was taken literally, and self-cremation as he had practised it constituted a ritual act which was regulated by a tradition and bound by a collection of beliefs. From the fifth to the tenth centuries religious suicides were very common, and it is believed that they continued long after that date since, clearly, recent events in Vietnam have re-established them (since June 1963).

With regard to the great period of religious fervour, details are supplied by three successive biographies devoted to the 'Lives of Eminent Monks' (Kao sêng chuan) respectively published in 544, 667 and 988[15]. From the point of view that concerns us here, these biographies have been studied by Jacques Gernet in his remarkable article 'Les suicides par le feu chez les bouddhistes chinois du V^e^ au X^e^ siècle' (*Mélanges publiés par l'Institut des Hautes Études chinoises*, II, Paris 1960). Eleven cases of suicide by fire are shown noted between 451 and 501, two in the sixth century, three in the seventh, four in the ninth and four in the tenth.

They all took place according to the formalised ritual: it was not a question of a 'minor incident' but a definite religious ceremony. This is the oldest case:

Fa-yü came from the prefecture of Chi (near present-day Yung-chi, the extreme south of Shansi). He took the robe when aged fifteen and was the disciple of Hui-shih who had founded a method of asceticism and cultivation of the *dhutas* (purification procedures). Fa-yü, who was full of energy and courage, penetrated (the secrets of) his method in depth. He constantly aspired to follow in the steps of the King of Medicinal Plants (Bhaiṣaj-yarāja) and burn himself in homage (to the Buddha). At that time, Yao Hsü, the fake prince of the Chin (Later Ch'in), had set up his garrison in Pu-fan (to the north of Yungchi). Fa-yü informed the prince of his intention. 'There are,' said Yao Hsü, 'many ways of entering the Path (*ju tao*). Why do you necessarily have to burn yourself? I do not dare oppose your plan categorically. However, I would be pleased if you would consider carefully.' Since Fa-yü's determination was unflinching, he instantly began to eat small pieces of incense and wrapped his body in oil-soaked cloths. He recited the chapter on the Abandoning of the Body (*shê shên p'fn*) and, finally, he set fire to himself. The monks and laymen who were present at this spectacle were all filled with compassion. Fa-yü was then forty-five years old (tr. after J. Gernet)[16].

This short account condenses in a few lines all the phases of the ceremony: the prior initiation into a method of asceticism; the formation of the intention to

burn oneself in homage to the Buddha, on the example of the Bodhisattva Priyadarśana; the authorisation sought from public powers and given, though not without reluctance; the recitation of a text, usually that of the 'Lotus', Ch. XXII; the cremation itself and, finally, the wonder of those present.

The influence of the 'Lotus of the Good Doctrine' on Buddhist customs appears even more clearly in the Brahmajālasūtra 'The Sūtra of Brahma's Net', an extremely widespread work in the whole of the Far East which constitutes the Code of the Mahāyāna in China. It would seem to have been translated by Kumārajīva in 406, but this has not been authenticated. In it it is said that if one does not burn one's body, arm or finger as an offering to the Buddhas, one is not a Bodhisattva. In order to obey this rule, Chinese monks, on the eve of their ordination, have fairly deep burns made on the top of their heads so as to destroy the hair roots. Small cylinders of carbonised aromatic wood are burnt on their skulls. That is why this ceremony is called *jên hsiang* or *chu hsiang* 'burning by incense'. On those who perform it, it confers a merit equal to that of a complete burning of the body since, in matters of ritual, the part equals the whole[17].

In brief then, if suicide was practised widely in Buddhist circles, this was due to three reasons. In the Hīnayāna the Noble Ones – whether Buddhas, Pratyekabuddhas or Arhats – once their work was done, met death voluntarily in order to enter Nirvāṇa as soon as possible. In the Mahāyāna, the Bodhisattvas offered up their bodies and lives for the welfare of beings or in order to pay homage to the Buddhas.

As was only to be expected, there was some resistance. It is said that the Buddha taught us to control ourselves: how could suicide contribute to the destruction of our passions? It is unworthy of a monk to cut off a piece of his flesh in exchange for a pigeon. It is not in our power to initate a Bodhisottva, but it *is* to conform ourselves scrupulously to the rules of the religious life.

The Buddha Śākyamuni proclaimed Śāriputra to be the wisest of his disciples. It is to him that we owe this stanza with the stamp of wisdom[18]:

I do not yearn for death,
I do not yearn for life;
I only wait for the hour to come,
Conscious and with mind alert.

Notes

Translator's note: This is a transcript of a lecture given to a predominantly Roman Catholic audience, which explains the lack of technical terms and annotation. I have taken the liberty of attempting to trace at least the main sources consulted and the notes which follow are entirely mine.

Pāli texts are cited according to the Pali Text Society editions.

T = *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* (The Tripiṭaka in Chinese), tr. J. Takakusu and K. Watanabe, Tokyo 1924–35.

Traité = E. Lamotte, *Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse de Nāgārjuna*, I–V, Louvain/Louvain-la-Neuve 1949–80.

* This paper first appeared under the title 'Le Suicide religieux dans le bouddhisme ancien' in the *Bulletin de l'Académie Royale de Belgique* – Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques, 5ᵉ série, LI, 1965 – 5, pp. 156–68. Translated by Sara Boin-Webb with grateful acknowledgements to the original publisher for permitting this English version to appear.

1 Vinaya III 72.
2 *Traité* II, pp. 740–2.
3 Dīgha II 106.
4 Dīgha II 156 ff.
5 Mahāvastu I 357; Lalitavistara 18–19; Fo pên hsing chi ching, T 190, ch. 6, p. 677a (tr. S. Beal, *The Romantic Legend of Śākya Buddha*, London 1875 – repr. Delhi 1985 – pp. 25–6); cf. *Traité* I, p. 182.
6 Cf. *Traité* I, p. 89, with many sources in n. 2.
7 Cf. Saṃyutta II 119–24; Tsa a han, T 99, No. 1265, ch. 47, pp. 345b–347b; Tsêng i a han, T 125, ch. 19, pp. 642b–643a; Pāli Apādana II 465.
8 Cf. Vinaya III 68 ff; Majjhima III 266; Saṃyutta IV 59.
9 Suvarṇaprabhāsa, Ch. 18: Vyāgṛhīparivarta; Jātakamālā, Ch. 1; Avadānakalpalatā, Ch. 51, vv. 28–50.
10 Laṅkāvatāra, p. 251; Avadānakalpalatā II, v. 109; pp. 119–35; Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā, p. 181; for further references, see *Traité*, p. 255 and note.
11 Jātaka No. 499; Jātakamālā No.2.
12 Divyāvadāna, Ch. 22, pp. 314–28; Avadānakalpalatā, Ch. 5 (I, pp. 154–75).
13 T 262, VI, *p'in* 22, p. 52b 4 ff (Bhaiṣajyarāja-pūrvayoga). Cf. L. Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*, New York 1976, p. 293 ff.
14 The Chinese pilgrim I-ching, as translated by J. Takakusu, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as practised in India and the Malay Archipelago by I-tsing* (London 1896), repr. Delhi 1966, pp. 197–9.
15 Cf R. Shih, *Biographies des Moines Eminents de Houei-kiao* I, Louvain 1968.
16 Gernet, *op. cit.*, p. 531.
17 J.J.M. de Croot, *Le Code du Mahāyāna en Chine* (tr. of the Brahmajālasūtra = Fan wan ching), Amsterdam 1893, repr. New York 1979, p. 231.
18 Theragāthā v. 1003.

14

A REVIEW OF SCHOLARSHIP ON THE BUDDHIST COUNCILS

Charles S. Prebish

Source: *Journal of Asian Studies* 33, 2 (1974): 239–54.

The problem of Buddhist councils has haunted western Buddhological research through almost all of its last one hundred years. At once, we see that a two-pronged approach is necessary if we are to ever have any hope of arriving at a resolution. The first of these involves a consideration of the relationship between the Vinaya council accounts and the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra, this latter text preserved in the Sūtra Piṭakas of the various schools and providing a detailed account of [1] the Buddha's travels immediately prior to his death, [2] the actual passing into parinirvāṇa, and [3] the funeral arrangements. Here the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra account concludes, but the details which are associated with the next allegedly historical events, namely, the council narratives, are found in the Skandhakas of the various Vinayas. Scholars began to question why the council proceedings, logically following the Buddha's death and funeral, are preserved in a separate text. Oldenberg felt there was no relation between the two texts, primarily because "the author of the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta did not know anything of the first Council."[1] Louis Finot, in "Mahāparinibbānasutta and Cullavagga," took the opposite pose, proposing that the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta and the council accounts originally constituted a continuous narrative which was somewhat indiscriminately split in two before insertion into the canon.[2] Frauwallner, in confirming Finot's suspicions, provides the following bits of information concerning the Vinayas[3]

1. Two Vinayas (Mūlasarvāstivādin and Mahāsāṃghika) place the entire Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra before the council accounts.
2. Three Vinayas (Sarvāstivādin, Dharmaguptaka, and Haimavata) retain large portions of the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra before the council accounts.
3. Two Vinayas (Pāli and Mahīśāsaka) preserve only the bare council accounts.

The above leads Frauwallner to the conclusion that:

> As we have already seen, this narrative (i.e. the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra) is found, whole or in parts, in all the Vinaya extant. This is in favor of an old established connection. We can even give it a fixed place within the Vinaya. It has been noticed that as a rule it stands at the end of the Vinaya, and at the utmost it is followed by some addenda.[4]

Although Frauwallner's conclusion is not thoroughly convincing, or for that matter, totally correct, he does go about as far as current scholarship allows. All of the above is a virtually verbatim statement from my review article on *The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature*.[5] Nevertheless, I have included it here simply because it represents the most concise summary of the first approach mentioned at the outset of this paper. The second approach, much more fruitful than the first, revolves around an investigation of the contents of these council accounts in the various sources. While the secondary council literature is less imposing than one might expect, considering the topic's importance for Buddhological study, it is considerable. Therefore, in discussing this second approach, I have restricted the source material so as to include only those books and articles which are absolutely essential for a thorough presentation. The works include (chronologically): [1] Louis de La Vallée Poussin, "The Buddhist Councils" [*Indian Antiquary*, XXXVII (1908), pp. 1–18 and 81–106],[6] [2] R. O. Franke, "The Buddhist Councils at Rājagaha and Vesālī as Alleged in Cullavagga XI., XII," [*Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 1908, pp. 1–80], [3] Jean Przyluski, *Le Concile de Rājagṛha* [Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1926–1928], [4] M. Hofinger, *Étude sur le concile de Vaiśālī* [Louvain: Bureaux de Muséon, 1946], [5] Paul Demiéville, "À propos du concile de Vaiśālī" [*T'oung Pao*, XL (1951), pp. 239–296], [6] André Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955], and [7] Nalinaksha Dutt, "The Second Buddhist Council" [*Indian Historical Quarterly*, XXXV, 1 (March, 1959), pp. 45–56]. For obvious reasons, we shall discuss only the councils up to, but not including, that held under the renowned king Kaniṣka.

The first council: Rājagṛha

The first requirement in a consideration of the Rājagṛha council is to present a a brief summary, from the Vinaya accounts, of the events.[7]

1. Kāśyapa appears and relates the details of his journey. When informed of Buddha's death, the *arhants* understand that all is indeed impermanent, but the nonreleased grieve. Subhadra alone is overjoyed with the Buddha's death, for he believes that the *bhikṣus* will no longer be bound to Gautama's rigid discipline. Kāśyapa sets forth the notion to chant the Dharma and Vinaya.
2. Kāśyapa is selected to elect the attending monks and 499 arhant bhikṣus are chosen. The bhikṣus plea for Ānanda, who had not yet attained arhantship,

to be admitted. Kāśyapa reconsiders and Ānanda is to be included, bringing the total number to 500.

3. A place for the council is sought and Rājagṛha is decided upon. Kāśyapa puts the motion to the saṃgha and it is agreed that the 500 bhikṣus are to spend the rainy season at Rājagṛha. No other bhikṣu is to enter the *varṣā* at Rājagṛha.
4. After entering the rain retreat at Rājagṛha, the first month is spent repairing the buildings, etc.
5. During the night previous to the convocation of the council, Ānanda becomes an arhant.
6. The council begins with Kāśyapa questioning Upāli on the Vinaya and Ānanda on the Dharma. Ānanda relates that the Buddha assented to abolishing the lesser and minor precepts, but Kāśyapa, in fear of the saṃgha falling into disrepute, decides to accept all the *Buddhavacana* unconditionally.
7. Ānanda is reproached for several faults.[8] Only reluctantly, he confesses his transgressions.
8. Purāṇa, a bhikṣu who had been travelling, arrives at Rājagṛha as the council is concluding its business. He is bidden to become one with the *saṃgīti*, but refuses, stating that he chooses to retain the doctrine and discipline as he remembers it to have been spoken by Buddha.[9]
9. Ānanda relates that Buddha declared that after his death, the *Brahmadaṇḍa* penalty was to be imposed on Channa. When Ānanda finds this bhikṣu and imposes the penalty on him, Channa becomes an arhant, at which time the penalty is suppressed.
10. The account of the council concludes and is referred to as the *Vinayasṃgīti* ("chanting of the Vinaya") or also as the council of 500.

Now we are prepared to examine what scholars have concluded from this scanty record. Virtually all the researchers have concluded that the council was not an historical event. Nevertheless, the vehemence with which they state their respective cases varies considerably. At the outset, reliance on the Pāli texts was predominant, a flaw which even La Vallée Poussin became enmeshed in. Representing perhaps the most temperate critic, La Vallée Poussin has stated,

> It seems evident that the account of the Culla, in that which concerns the Council and its (properly speaking) scriptural deliberations, is not historic ... On the other hand, the episodes of Channa, and of Purāṇa, the failings of Ānanda, the discussion about the *kṣudrakas*, bear the mark of a high antiquity, and without fear of being too credulous we may admit as possible, indeed probable, not only that after the disappearance of Buddha assemblies did take place in which the ecclesiastical power was affirmed by the settling of questions of discipline,—of that we consider ourselves almost certain—but also that the cause of the existence of these assemblies was the discussion of our "episodes."[10]

Of course the motive behind such a council narration is obviously clear, and La Vallée Poussin summarizes it well:

> The Master is no longer living: it was necessary that some authority should be organised or affirmed to formally contradict Subhadra, who believed himself freed from all rule by the disappearance of Buddha, to attaint Channa, whose sentence the Master did not have time to pronounce, to reprimand Ānanda himself, who is no longer protected by the affection of Buddha against the jealousies it had aroused . . . His omniscience allowed him to seize the essential part in everything and to accommodate his precepts, like his doctrine, to the needs of each. But he is no longer there to soothe the conflicts (vivāda), and the community, widowed of its infallible chief, must have rules.[11]

Unfortunately, not all voices, as well as criticisms, have been so temperate as that of the great Belgian scholar. Writing in 1908, R. O. Franke concluded, "In the first place, to inquire into date, object, and procedure of the first two Councils as something historical is a question falsely put."[12]

Franke goes on,

> To seek a historical background is to make something merely literary into something actually real, and indicates a logical fallacy. To inquire into the date of the first Council is to inquire into a point of time later than the compilation of D. xvi (Dīgha Nikāya, Sutta XVI). This Suttanta is a text of about 100 printed pages in length. And this text, quite apart from the probability of its being a secondary conglomerate, cannot have been compiled in less than one or two weeks after the Buddha's death, even if the inconceivable be held possible—namely, that the compiler set to work immediately. Hence to ask about the date of this Council is impossible, or at least irrational.[13]

It was not until Przyluski's *Le Concile de Rājagṛha* that we were to be graced with full use of sources. Regarding the Pāli sources the author succinctly states, "The Pāli texts, however important they may be, cannot claim to exclusively retain (our) attention."[14] Przyluski's work is divided into three parts:

I. The Council According to the Sūtras and Commentaries
II. The Councils According to the Vinayas
III. The Seasonal Festivals and the Council.

Parts I and II are, for the most part, self explanatory and need no further elaboration here, but it is in Part III that Przyluski begins to develop his ideas about the council. Clearly, cultic aspects were of prime importance to him. Between 1918 and 1920 he published "Le Parinirvāṇa et les Funérailles du Buddha,"[15] and it is

not unreasonable to suspect that his council study simply represents the logical conclusion of the earlier work. Emphasizing the cultic notion, Przyluski comments:

> A growing religion is always organized around a cult and, in the cult, the festivals are probably the essential. These are ritual masses intended to maintain or to re-establish the cosmic and social order. They assume collective representations of the times, the world, the society. A mythic or legendary recitation corresponds to each of these which explain the origins of the festival by the act of a god or hero. To use an Indian term, the essential in Buddhism is the Dharma, that is to say, that which maintains the cosmic and social order. In claiming primacy for the cult, we can only proclaim the priority of Dharma, that is to say, of the religious law not yet distinct from the moral law.[16]
>
> Consequently, it is possible to isolate the ancient themes around which the accounts of the first council are constituted. One recounts at first how, after the death of Buddha, his disciples spent the first rainy season at Rājagṛha: (the) convocation of all the faithful at Rājagṛha, comprising there those who lived in the supraterrestrial region; the death of Gāvampati, in likelihood caused by the announcement of the death of the Master, but which is in reality the mythic equivalent of an ancient rite destined to bring on the first rains. During the rainy season, the monks preach the law to the devotees who provided offerings to them. Finally, the closing of the varṣā is marked by a ceremony of purification. Ānanda, the Gautamid, devotes himself to the salvation of all; an act of accusation is set up by which one charges him with diverse faults; he yields, is dismissed, and the entire community is thus purified of its defilements. At this stage, the account of the first varṣā is a sort of *avadāna* or legendary recitation. Destined to explain the two great festivals of the beginning and end of the rains by this which was formerly undertaken in the early epochs of the Church, this recitation rests, in the last analysis, on a pre-Buddhist myth: the death of the god of aridity, and on a ceremony equally anterior to Śākyamuni: the festival of collective purification by excommunication.[17]

Two problems remain: [1] the relationship of all this to the Vinayas, and [2] the relationship of the various council accounts to the Hīnayāna sects. Przyluski offers opinions on both of these points. Concerning the first:

> The necessities of the monastic life and the development of the casuistic give rise to the Vinaya. On the one hand, the Prātimokṣa is amplified by the introduction of new decisions and the incorporation of a commentary; on the other hand, the numerous derogations of the regulations of the dhūtaguṇas are classified in a series of short treatises on

> vestment, nourishment, etc. . . . The Prātimokṣa, moral code, and the series of dhūtaguṇas, disciplinary regulations, are the two poles around which the Vinaya is organized. Its elaboration is restricted by remembrance of the last recommendations of the Buddha, not very favorable to the multiplication of the "minor and lesser prohibitions." This obstacle is dispelled by common consent and the Vinaya concludes by constituting itself into a distinct basket (piṭaka). To this movement the name Upāli is attached, who was probably one of the first specialists of the discipline. After the division of the scriptures into Dharma and Vinaya, one modifies the account of the first council accordingly, and the recitation of the Vinaya is attributed to Upāli.[18]

On the second point:

> Consequently, one (can) explain the diversity of the accounts of the council. There are as many different recitations as there are sects having a distinct canon. Each school tries to prove that its canon dates back to the origins of the Church and that it was codified by the assembly of Rājagṛha. Evidently, these contradictory accounts could not pass for the authentic, official proceedings. They are no less precious since they contain two categories of documents: legendary themes which date back to the origins of the Church and an inventory of the canons particular to each sect.[19]

It should be quite obvious by this point that these early investigators infused much of their personality and many of their predispositions into their studies, and consequently, the results obtained must be regarded as thoroughly provisional. However, in 1955 André Bareau made an extremely careful study of the councils,[20] relying on an exhaustive use of the primary and secondary sources, and has provided some very meaningful conclusions. Regarding the date, the Dharmaguptaka, Haimavata, and Mahāsāṃghika Vinayas state only that it was a short time after Buddha's parinirvāṇa, while the Theravādin, Mahīśāsaka, and Sarvāstivādin texts place the event during the varṣā following Gautama's death.[21] All the Vinayas agree that the council was held at Rājagṛha, but any attempts at a more localized definition fail due to the diversity of sites mentioned in the records. As to why Rājagṛha was chosen, the answer is clear enough: ". . . it was only in the ancient capital of Magadha that the members of the council could find sufficient shelter and refuge."[22] The number of monks attending the council appears to be 500, a number which is both convenient and artificial, but the manner of selection is not at all clear. The Dharmaguptaka Vinaya, for example, states that the monks selected were those assembled at Kuśinārā for Buddha's funeral, and they *designated themselves* as participants.[23] Bareau places little historic value on the number of monks and the designation of all of them as arhants.[24] The hierarchy of the leaders of the council poses an

interesting question: was leadership designated on the basis of merit or seniority? Traditionally, we have come to blindly assume that Mahākāśyapa was the leading figure of the council (and I have indicated this in my summary). Nevertheless, the Sarvāstivādin, Mūlasarvāstivādin, and Mahīśāsaka texts seem to indicate Ājñāta Kauṇḍinya as a leading figure.[25] From this, Przyluski concluded a developmental pattern, changing gradually from an emphasis on seniority to the celebration of merit.[26] The corollary however, that his assumption makes the Sarvāstivādin, Mūlasarvāstivādin, and Mahīśāsaka texts the most ancient is extremely difficult to maintain and support. In coming to Ānanda's role in the council, we find several problematics. In the first place, was Ānanda supposed to be invited to the council? There appears to be no question about this point, as Bareau notes,

> . . . Ānanda was supposed to participate in the council because, having been the most intimate companion of the Buddha, he had heard all the teachings and only he could recite them in their complete form.[27]

However, it was precisely because of his faithful service to the Buddha that Ānanda was never able, during Buddha's lifetime, to put the Teaching to use,[28] and this points up the second question. Was Ānanda an arhant? Bareau views the account of Ānanda's attainment of enlightenment as pure invention, necessary for two reasons: [1] for his own personal prestige, and [2] so as not to include an impure personage in the council.[29] Of course, this only follows making Ānanda's lack of arhanthood a subject of chastisement, thus preserving the piety of the assembly. Also problematic is the account of the canon supposedly compiled at the council. Analysis of the texts reveals the following:[30]

	Canon Description	*Schools*
I.	Dvipiṭaka: Vinaya and Sūtra Piṭakas	1. Theravādin 2. Mahāsāṃghika 3. Mahīśāsaka
II.	Tripiṭaka: Vinaya, Sūtra, and Abhidharma Piṭakas	1. Dharmaguptaka 2. Sarvāstivādin 3. Haimavata

Interestingly enough, from materials presented in another article,[31] the schools in Category I have been provisionally surmised to be relatively early, while the schools in Category II appear to be late. Coming now to the Channa episode, we find Bareau, once again, providing a very reasonable explanation:

> It is easy, here, to reconstruct the primitive version, which could only have been inserted, besides, in the common recitation of the Mahīśāsaka-Theravādin before they split into two distinct schools. At Kauśāmbī there was a monk named Caṇḍa or Channa, whose violent and irritable

> nature troubled the community. At the end of the council, Ānanda was sent to notify him, in the name of the assembly, (that) the punishment of brahmadaṇḍa (was imposed on him). When Ānanda had explained to him what the above consisted of, the guilty one was so moved that he rapidly became an arhant. This recitation was probably invented by the Mahīśāsaka-Theravādin community of Kauśāmbī with the goal of giving a canonical base to the procedure of brahmadaṇḍa. The Sanskrit name of the monk, Caṇḍa, which signifies violent, cruel, was without doubt, in the primitive recitation, only an epithet, or at the most, a nick-name.[32]

We come now to perhaps the most important point: the historicity of the council. Bareau succinctly states his case, from which I have chosen three quotations, exemplary of his (and also my) position.

> 1. One single point remains strange in this primitive version: why does it not give the least description of the canon whose authenticity it is trying to establish. In fact, all the descriptions of the canon figuring in the recitations of the first council are late, as their multiple divergencies clearly prove.
> 2. If some questionable elements would profit from the disappearance of the founder of the doctrine in order to liberate themselves, as the tradition relative to the council of Rājagṛha relates it, it appears doubtful that they could have constituted a serious menace to the community. It was therefore not necessary, as it appears to us, to call together a council, shortly after the parinirvāṇa, to reunite the doctrinal elements and thus assure their preservation.
> 3. Sometimes one even has the impression that the recitation of the council of Rājagṛha has been inspired by the history of the second council and that its author wished to justify the authenticity of the canon, on the one hand, in order to support the condemnation of the monks of Vaiśālī, sanction (of) which was founded precisely on canonical texts, and on the other hand, in order to prevent all possible future dissidence in giving the community a body of scriptures which held authority.[33]

The second council: I. Vaiśālī

As with the first council, we had best begin with a brief, general summary of the events of the Vaiśālī council.[34]

1. About a century after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa, the *vṛjiputraka* bhikṣus at Vaiśālī allowed the practice of ten points.

2. Yaśas, son of Kālaṇḍaka, arriving in Vaiśālī, observes indulgence in the ten points. Believing these points to be unlawful. Yaśas protests, whereupon he has the *pratisaṃharaṇīya-karma* brought against him.
3. In compliance with this penalty, Yaśas goes to the village to ask pardon from the laymen. However, in clinging to what he understands as correct, Yaśas convinces the laymen that the vṛjiputraka bhikṣus are at fault.
4. When the monks learn of Yaśas' actions, they confer the *utkṣepaṇīya-karma* on him.[35]
5. Yaśas goes to Kauśāmbī to seek support, eventually meeting Saṃbhūta Śāṇavāsin. Yaśas relates the ten points to Saṃbhūta who decides to side with him.
6. Further supporters are sought, and it is decided to try to win Revata to their side. After locating Revata and explaining the ten points to him, he also sides with Yaśas. Ṣāla also sides with Yaśas' group.
7. While all this is transpiring, the vṛjiputraka bhikṣus also seek to gain adherents. They go to Revata's dwelling to seduce him over to their side. Revata refuses, but one of his disciples accepts. There is question as to where the problem of the legality of the ten points should be settled and Vaiśālī is decided upon.
8. A new episode is recounted with Revata carrying on a dialogue with Sarvagāmin, an elder monk of Vaiśālī who has Ānanda as his *upādhyāya*.
9. Śāṇavāsin arrives to question Sarvagāmin on the ten points. The outcome is the convocation of the council.
10. The council begins with Revata as its president. Sarvagāmin is questioned on each of the ten points, rejecting them in turn on the basis of various scriptures. When the ten points have been sufficiently explained, and condemned, the council is concluded, having been referred to as the recital of Vinaya (Vinayasaṃgīti) or as the recital of the 700.

As the ten points were important enough to appear as the pretext for convocation of a council, we had best enumerate them.[36]

1. *Siṅgiloṇakappa*—preserving salt in a horn.
2. *Dvaṅgulakappa*—taking food when the shadow is beyond two fingers wide.
3. *Gāmantarakappa*—after finishing a meal, one may go to another village for another meal.
4. *Āvāsakappa*—holding several *Uposathas* within the same *sīmā*.
5. *Ānumatikappa*—to confirm an act in an incomplete assembly, only later having it confirmed by monks who are not present.
6. *Āciṇṇakappa*—to carry out an act improperly, citing as authority its habitual performance in this way.
7. *Amathitakappa*—after eating, to drink unchurned milk which is somewhere between the states of milk and curd.
8. *Jalogim*—to drink unfermented wine.

9. *Adasakaṃ nisīdanam*—to use a mat without a border.
10. *Jātarūparajatam*—to accept gold and silver.

There is unquestionable cleavage among scholars in the interpretation of these points in terms of their relation to the Vinaya. Hofinger notes, "Far from demonstrating the antiquity of the Vinaya, the fact that the code does not explicitly cite the 10 formulas of Vaiśālī explains only too well that they had been composed long after the quarrel."[37] On the other hand, Pachow remarks, "If the date of the Second Council can be trusted . . . it is obvious that the Vinaya literature, by that time, had made rather rapid progress."[38]

Having laid out the necessary preliminaries, we may now try to determine what conclusions the various scholars have drawn from the information. That R. O. Franke was hostile to the notion of a second council should not surprise anyone, especially considering his remarks concerning the Rājagṛha council. Regarding the Vaiśālī council he states,

> We may confront the chronicle of the 'Second Council' with even greater indifference. This is not only a merely literary construction; it does not even possess any relevant subject matter. Whether such monkish steam as those ten puerilities was ever let off has little or no importance for the history of Buddhist literature. We do not hear whether, on that occasion, anything was done by way of settling the Canon, except from secondary sources. That the prior existence of the Vinaya is attested is a fact that did not need the help of C.V. xii (Cullavagga XII).[39]

La Vallée Poussin's article, "The Buddhist Councils," aside from a presentation of the events and a discussion of the relation between the Vinaya and the ten points (with which I do not concur), presents only little interpretive material.

Through the research of Hofinger, Demiéville, and Bareau, whose studies are cited at the outset of this article, we begin to fit the pieces together. The date of the council already sets us on unsure ground. The Vinayas of the Theravādins, Mahiśāsakas, Dharmaguptakas, and Haimavatas state the date to be 100 years after Buddha's parinirvāṇa, while the Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinayas record 110 years.[40] The Mahāsāṃghika text offers no date. All this prompts Bareau to conclude:

> Now do we have any means to determine this date? All that we can say with certitude is that the council of Vaiśālī, if it was a historic event, took place between the nirvāṇa of the Buddha and the first schism. That it is posterior to the nirvāṇa is what we clearly learn from the mass of sources. Further, the Mahāsāṃghikas, in giving a relation obviously similar to that of the Sthaviras, (illustrate that) the council is necessarily anterior to the schism which separated the first from the second.[41]

What of the site of the council? As to the general location, all Vinaya sources are uniform: Vaiśālī. However, the Mahāsāṃghikas indicate *vālukārāma* as the residence of the guilty monks, and the Sarvāstivādins, Theravādins, and Dharmaguptakas confirm this monastery as the spot of the council.[42] The absence of any mention of a place name in the Mahīśāsaka, Mūlasarvāstivādin, and Haimavata Vinayas leads Bareau to conclude that vālukārāma, while being a famous ancient monastery in Vaiśālī, was affixed to some of the Vinaya accounts at a later date.[43] Traditionally, Buddhologists have assigned the origin of the Vaiśālī conflict to the ten points mentioned previously, and some scholars have even gone as far as to surmise that the ten points were responsible for the first great schism of the sects: "It is historically confirmed, I think, that the first schism in the Church proceeded from Vesālī and that the dasa vatthūni (i.e. the ten points) of the Vajji-monks brought it about."[44] Bareau and Hofinger proceed from another line of attack. In the first place, Bareau states,

> As we have seen, the passages relative to the 10 customs of the monks of Vaiśālī, and which figure only in the recitations of the Sthaviras, are inserted in the above in an artificial manner. The council of Vaiśālī was instigated by the mere quest for gold and money.[45]

Let us see how he substantiates this bold statement. The first order of business is to examine the ten points in the various Vinayas. Although the numbering schema differs in each school, and there is a minor difference in wording each point, the ten points do, in fact, appear homogeneous.[46] Further, Hofinger has traced the ten points in the Pāli Pātimokkha,[47] a task which Bareau believes could be easily carried out with respect to the other schools.[48] Now for the key: in the Mahāsāṃghika account only the point concerning the possession of gold and silver is mentioned.[49] Due to the omission of the other nine points in the Mahāsāṃghika council account, several scholars have tended to consider this school lax, thus holding them culpable with regard to the schism. For example, Demiéville writes, "Consequently, even on the single point of discipline which the Mahāsāṃghikas mention of in their recitation of the council of Vaiśālī, their Vinaya turns out to be infinitely more lax than the Pāli Vinaya."[50] How do the Mahāsāṃghikas stand in regard to the nine other points? Even a cursory study of their Vinaya reveals that all ten points are included therein, and Bareau documents this carefully, using the available Chinese texts.[51] I might add that a study of the Sanskrit texts available tends toward the same result. All of the above led Bareau to three conclusions about the Mahāsāṃghikas, and necessarily, the Vaiśālī council:[52]

> 1. If the Mahāsāṃghikas only speak of a single one of the 10 evil practices pertinent to the council of Vaiśālī, this is because it was the only case in the primitive version, as we have shown with the aid of other arguments.

> 2. If they do not speak of the 9 other customs, this is not because they approved of them, since they implicitly condemn them elsewhere. Consequently, the Mahāsāṃghikas cannot, in any fashion, be identified with the evil monks who practice them, and who the recitations of the Sthaviras compare to the Vṛjiputrakas, guilty of having begged gold and precious objects. The 9 customs of the monks of Vaiśālī, therefore, could not have been one of the causes of the schism which separated the Mahāsāṃghikas from the Sthaviras, as the Sinhalese chronicles affirm and, following them, certain historians of Buddhism. In fact, the two sects were in accord on this point, as M. Hofinger has well shown.
> 3. The Mahāsāṃghikas could not be considered exclusively as easterners, the Prācīnaka, the same title as the Vṛjiputrakas, since, in condemning all the guilty practices attributed to the latter, they gained distinction as far as the Sthaviras themselves.

To present a detailed account of the events, characters, and procedure of the Vaiśālī council, because of the disparity in the texts, would be a laborious task. Consequently, I refer the reader to Hofinger or Bareau, reserving space here to discuss their (as well as other) conclusions about the council. Both Bareau and Hofinger see real history in the council of Vaiśālī. Hofinger states it directly: "The council of Vaiśālī is not a fiction,"[53] and Bareau indirectly: "We see, therefore, that the hypothesis of the historicity of the council of Vaiśālī appears as much more defensible than the contrary hypothesis."[54] Demiéville, on the other hand is doubtful:

> In the absence of all epigraphical or archeological confirmation, the historicity of the Buddhist councils, and above all, that of the council of Vaiśālī, does not offer more guarantee, I fear, than these anecdotes which, in the Vinaya, claim to historically explain the origin of the disciplinary regulations: that the original foundation of the recitation of the councils may be historic or that it may be pure legend, this is a question whose solution could only be arbitrary in the current state of our knowledge.[55]

In the council, Hofinger sees a strong tension between the western schools, i.e. the Sthavira, Mahīśāsaka, Dharmaguptaka, and Sarvāstivādin, and the eastern school, the Mahāsāṃghika.[56] The geographical tension theory was not particularly new, having been outlined by Przyluski.[57] Hofinger simply adjusted it to his needs. Bareau vigorously opposed Hofinger on this point. He writes,[58]

> It is without doubt imprudent to draw conclusions on the primitive geographical redress of the sects from indications as fragmentary as those furnished by our recitations. At the most, one can note certain preferences of this or that one among them for a certain city or region.

Further,

> In conclusion, in place of an opposition between the eastern and western communities, we find rather, at the origin, a conflict between the rigorist tendencies of the missionaries occupied with conquering new territories for Buddhism (as the northwest of the Gangetic basin, Avanti, and the Dekkhan) and the laxist tendencies of the monks leading an easy life in the great monasteries of the holy cities of Buddhism where the pilgrims flocked (as Vaiśālī). This geographic opposition has no relation with the doctrinal opposition between the Mahāsāṃghikas which appears nowhere in our recitations.

For both scholars (Bareau and Hofinger), the Mahāsāṃghika and Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya texts appear to be the most ancient.[59] Although this view seems to support Frauwallner's findings, presented in the first two chapters of *The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature*, it has not remained altogether free from criticism. Nalinaksha Dutt has recently raised an objection regarding the antiquity of the Mahāsāṃghika and Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinayas. On the first text, Dutt makes three remarks:[60]

> 1. To assign antiquity to the Mahāsaṅghika Vinaya just for its brief account of the Council does not appear to us very sound.
> 2. If the Mahāvastu be a sample of the Vinaya of the Mahāsaṅghika group, by no stretch of the imagination can the Vinaya of this sect be regarded as anterior to the Pāli version.
> 3. Its lateness is further established by its contents, e.g., the composition of the Saṅgha, so unorthodox as stated above, and the names of patriarchs, as pointed out by Mons. Hofinger as more recent than those of the other Vinayas.

As to the first point, I think Dutt is somewhat harsh. Bareau's argument is really not quite so simple. Nevertheless, all the evidence that I have gathered, both internal and developmental, leads to exactly the same conclusion as Bareau. The second point can be dismissed at once, for almost all scholars on Buddhism agree that the Mahāvastu is, in fact, an avadāna rather than a canonical Vinaya text of the Lokottaravādin sect. The third point seems to reduce itself to a question of opinion, and for my part, Frauwallner's argument favoring the antiquity of the Mahāsāṃghika patriarch (or much more accurately, teacher) list is more convincing than either Hofinger or Dutt.[61] Dutt's refutation of the supposed antiquity of the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya is, almost entirely, based on what he calls the "good grammatical language"[62] of the text (which he edited). Dr. Dutt, of course, is speaking only of the *vastus*. It may be that Dr. Dutt's notions about good grammar differ considerably from my own, but even a superficial examination of the Prātimokṣa Sūtra of this school (also found at Gilgit, and

edited not by Dutt but rather by Ankul Candra Banerjee), yields quite the opposite result. I also contend that even in the vastus we are not dealing with careful Sanskrit grammar. While I concur with Dr. Dutt's conclusion about the lateness of the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya (as will be demonstrated in my forthcoming article: "The Prātimonkṣa Puzzle: Fact Versus Fantasy"), I cannot accept his method.

Professor Demiéville takes a totally opposite position, and although not being totally unfavorably disposed to Hofinger's argument on geographical cleavage,[63] he asserts,

> For my part, I cannot refrain from seeing in the tradition relative to the council of Vaiśālī, above all, a reflection of this conflict between rigorism and laxism, between monasticism and laicism, between "sacred" and "profane," which traverses all the history of Buddhism and which, after having provoked the schism between the Sthaviras and Mahāsāṃghikas, is expressed later by the opposition between Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna.[64]

Demiéville seems to be pointing to those events which resulted in the celebrated schism, reminding us of a very important detail: we have come to the end of our consideration of the council of Vaiśālī and still there has been no mention of any separation of schools. Why? The answer is clear: *nowhere*, in *any* of the Vinayas, is there any mention of a schism. From the point of view of the Vinaya, the council proceedings satisfied both groups involved, and with the strict monastic discipline reestablished and reinforced, a schism was avoided. Bareau has said as much: "The primitive version is, as M. Hofinger has well shown, anterior to the first schism, that which separated the Mahāsāṃghikas from the Sthaviras."[65] Now we all know that a schism did take place around this time. In order to explain it we might take one of two postures, assuming of course that we accept that no schism actually occurred at Vaiśālī:

1. That the schism took place abruptly or gradually, leaving no evidence, historical or otherwise.
2. That the schism was the subject of yet another council.

The records seem to dictate the favorability of the second approach, and this must now be illustrated.

The second council: II. Pāṭaliputra

The information we possess on this "second" Second Council is derived entirely from non-Vinaya sources. Consequently, I shall try to keep my presentation as brief as possible so as not to stray far beyond the scope of this paper.

In dating the council, Bareau relies on three sources:

1. Mahāprajñāpāramitā (upadeśa) śāstra (*Taishō* 1509, p. 70a)
2. Samayabhedoparacanacakra of Vasumitra (*Taishō* 2031–2033; *Tanjur-Mdo*, XC, No. 11)
3. Nikāyabhedavibhaṅgavyākhyāna of Bhavya, 2 lists (*Tanjur-Mdo*, XC, No. 12).

The later sources, such as Paramārtha, Ki-tsang, Bu-ston, Hsüan-tsang, and Tāranātha are omitted because Bareau feels that these authors simply criticize the earlier theorized dates.[66] Thus, the following four dates are possible:[67]

1. 100 A.N. (i.e. after nirvāṇa)—Mahāprajñāpāramitā (upadeśa) śāstra
2. 116 A.N.—Samayabhedoparacanacakra
3. 137 A.N.—Nikāyabhedavibhaṅgavyākhyāna, list 2
4. 160 A.N.—Nikāyabhedavibhaṅgavyākhyāna, list 1.

Dismissing the extreme dates as manifestly aberrant (on the basis of his article in the 1953 *Journal Asiatique:* "La date du Nirvāṇa"), Bareau leaves us with two choices. Bareau favors the date 137 A.N., stating,

> On the contrary, if one compares the rigorist attitude taken by the future Mahāsāṃghikas at the time of the second council with their attitude at the moment of the schism, one sees that their austerity has singularly diminished between times, and an interval of thirty-seven years between the two events does not appear at all exaggerated.[68]

As to the place where the council was held, the sources are completely in accord: Pāṭaliputra.[69] The ruling king is less easy to determine. Without digressing into a lengthy discourse, we have two choices:[70]

1. Kālāśoka (if we accept the date 116 A.N.)
2. Mahāpadma the Nandin (if we accept the date 137 A.N.).

The issue or issues which appear to have instigated the schism is also somewhat difficult to determine. On the one hand, all the traditions excepting the Mahāsāṃghika indicate the five theses of Mahādeva as the origin of the schism.[71] On the other hand, the Mahāsāṃghikas objected to the developments and additions introduced into the Vinaya Piṭaka by the Sthavira. While the Sthavira tradition regarding Mahādeva's five theses bears the support of such eminent persons as Vasumitra, Bhavya, Paramārtha, Tāranātha, and others, the Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya argument also has a strong basis, as their Prātimokṣa Sūtras, both for monks and nuns, possess fewer rules than any other Hīnayāna sect. A provisional explanation is offered by Bareau:

> In fact, although the five theses above are never mentioned or discussed in the works of Vinaya, they are nevertheless intimately connected to

> the monastic discipline. The first, relative to the presence of nocturnal seminal emissions in the arhant, is only a corollary of the first *saṃghāvaśeṣa* which, in all the Prātimokṣas or monastic codes, condemns the monk who, except for the case of a dream, emits his semen. The Sthaviras vigorously enforce this regulation in suppressing, for the arhant, the excuse of a dream, allowed for the ordinary monk, whereas the Mahāsāṃghikas hold to the letter of this article of the disciplinary code. As for the four other theses, these could be born from speculations on the spiritual and intellectual qualities required of the *ācārya* and *upādhyāya* masters such as they are enumerated in the chapters relative to ordination (*upasaṃpadā*).[72]

As to the council itself, it appears that the king was asked to serve as mediator, but being unqualified to make religious judgments on the issues, had only one choice open to him: to assemble the two parties and count the number of partisans in each, as well as noting their particular positions.[73] Certainly this would at least explain the names Mahāsāṃghika and Sthavira. On this point, Bareau notes,

> The condemnation of the Sthaviras by the king at the end of the council could only be a rationalist reconstitution founded on the results of a vote and the intentions attributed to the king in arranging to count the two opposing groups, the sovereign having taken the decision to condemn the minority party, and this was revealed to be that of the Sthavira. The two other traditions, that of the Theravādins and that of the Saṃmatīyas, in no way speak of a similar royal judgement, but one could admit that they have sought to suppress the condemnation of their spiritual ancestors.[74]

When the council concluded, only one task remained for each group: to reorganize, tightening and strengthening their respective positions through the appropriate modifications in their canons. No doubt this was carried out, leading to further internal divisions in each of the two groups. In review, Bareau sees the following points as certain:[75]

1. All the ancient traditions consider this event the first true schism in the saṃgha, separating it into two groups.
2. The Mahāsāṃghikas had certain laxist tendencies while the Sthaviras remained rigorist.
3. All the ancient sources are, within a given limit, agreed on the date of the schism.
4. The procedure of this schism followed that set forth in the *adhikaraṇaśamatha* section of the Vinaya, an attempt to appease the disagreement having been made.
5. The common version represents an historic event.

Further, there is also good reason to accept the following:[76]

1. The schism took place at Pāṭaliputra.
2. The subject of the schism was Mahādeva's five theses.
3. The king, probably one of the first rulers in the Nanda Dynasty, tried in vain to arbitrate the affair.
4. After the schism, each group reorganized and also revised their respective canon.

The third council: Pāṭaliputra

The sources from which we draw our information on the third council are non-canonical, and with one exception, non-Vinaya. Further, they are fourfold:

1. Dīpavaṃsa (Chapter VII)
2. Mahāvaṃsa (Chapter V)
3. Mahābodhivaṃsa (pp. 103–111)[77]
4. Samantapāsādikā (Volume I, pp. 52–61).[78]

It should also be pointed out that only the Pāli sources mention this council. The date and place of the council seem certain: the Mahāvaṃsa (V.280) cites the close of the council to be the seventeenth year of Aśoka's reign and the Dīpavaṃsa (VII.37 and 44) cites 236 A.N. (i.e. 247 B.C.) as the date. The place was Pīṭaliputra, Aśoka's capital. The cause too is clear enough on the surface: heretics were entering the saṃgha and degrading the Dharma (Mahāvaṃsa V.228–230). Bareau tends to see the council as the one which separated the Sarvāstivādins and Vibhajyavādins from the Sthavira proper.[79] Although the various events of the council are subject to dispute, and I do not wish to discuss them here, it does appear that Moggaliputta Tissa presided over an assembly of 1000 monks, ultimately concluding that Buddha was a Vibhajyavādin.[80] Concerning the historicity of this council, Bareau concludes,

> As we have seen, it is certain that a council following a serious menace of schism took place under the reign of the great Aśoka. That which we have deduced from the three edicts of Sāñcī, Sārnāth, and Kosambī informs us of: (1) the severe menace to the community; (2) the gravity of this menace, attested to by the fact that the edict is reproduced in three specimens situated in distant places which were, moreover, great centers of pilgrimage; (3) the royal intervention, attested to by the origin of the edict as (also) by its contents; (4) the sanction incurred by the schismatics, which necessarily presupposed a judgement, (and) therefore a judicial assembly. On the other hand, the minute regulation relative to acts (karman) of the Buddhist community is such that we are

> supposed to necessarily infer from the menace of the schism, and still more from the sanctions applied to the guilty, to the meeting of a synodal assembly. Consequently, the recitations of the Sinhalese chronicles relate well to a concise historic fact.[81]

In closing our discussion of Buddhist councils, we might point out that, in addition to the problematics discussed, several topics which are general but complementary equally deserve study. These are pointed out in Chapter V of *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques* (pp. 134–144):

1. The essential function of the council
2. The convocation of the council
3. The degree of universality of the council
4. The ceremonial (aspects) of the council
5. The functions and authority of the members of the council
6. The judiciary power of the council
7. The relation of the king and the council.

If and when we are able to relate the seven issues just listed to the specific details of the individual councils, and make valid judgements based thereon, perhaps the resolution of the mystery of the Buddhist councils will be at hand.

Notes

1 Hermann Oldenberg [ed.], *The Vinaya Piṭakam* [5 vols., reprint; London: Luzac & Company, Ltd. (for P.T.S.), 1964], I, p. xxviii.
2 Louis Finot, "Mahāparinibbāna-sutta and Cullavagga," *Indian Historical Quarterly*, VIII, 2 [June, 1932], pp. 241–246.
3 Erich Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature* [Rome: Instituto per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente (Serie Orientale Roma), 1956], pp. 44–45.
4 *Ibid.*, p. 45. The parentheses are mine.
5 See Charles S. Prebish, "Theories Concerning the Skandhaka: An Appraisal," *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXXII, 4 [August, 1973], p. 674.
6 This article was also published in *Le Muséon*, VI [1905], pp. 213–323.
7 This summary is condensed from Jean Przyluski, *Le Concile de* Rājagṛha [Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1926–1928], pp. 133–235, and also Louis de La Vallée Poussin, "The Buddhist Councils," *Indian Antiquary*, XXXVII [1908], pp. 1–6.
8 According to La Vallée Poussin, "The Buddhist Councils," pp. 4–5, the number of these faults varies with the different schools. He records: Theravādins—5, Mahīśāsakas—6, Dharmaguptakas—7, and Mahāsāṃghikas—7.
9 This account is most thoroughly preserved in the Chinese translations. See, for example, Przyluski, *Le Concile de Rājagṛha*, pp. 195–198 [Dharmaguptaka Vinaya].
10 La Vallée Poussin, "The Buddhist Councils," pp. 17–18. The italics are mine.
11 *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.
12 R. O. Franke, "The Buddhist Councils at Rājagaha and Vesālī as Alleged in Cullavagga XI., XII.," *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 1908, p. 68.
13 *Ibid.* The parentheses are mine.

14 Przyluski, *Le Concile de Rājagṛha*, Avant-Propos, p. 1.
15 *Journal Asiatique*, Série XI, Tome XI [Mai-Juin, 1918], pp. 485–526; Série XI, Tome XII [November–Décembre, 1918], pp. 401–456; Série XI, Tome XIII [Mai–Juin, 1919], pp. 365–430; Série XI, Tome XV [Janvier-Mars, 1920], pp. 5–54.
16 Przyluski, *Le Concile de Rājagṛha*, p. 372.
17 *Ibid.*, pp. 373–374. The italics are mine.
18 *Ibid.*, pp. 375–376.
19 *Ibid.*, p. 377.
20 André Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955].
21 *Ibid.*, p. 1.
22 *Ibid.*, p. 2.
23 Przyluski, *Le Concile de Rājagṛha*, p. 171. I have previously noted Mahākāśyapa as the selector simply because he fulfills this role in the majority of the Vinayas.
24 Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, p. 5.
25 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
26 Przyluski, *Le Concile de Rājagṛha*, pp. 298–305.
27 Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, p. 13.
28 *Ibid.*
29 *Ibid.*
30 Taken from Przyluski, *Le Concile de Rājagṛha*, pp. 333–365, but also see Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, p. 24.
31 See my forthcoming article, "The Prātimokṣa Puzzle: Fact Versus Fantasy," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*.
32 Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, p. 26.
33 These three statements are taken from Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, pp. 27, 29, and 28, respectively. The last statement is very reminiscent of Frauwallner's position.
34 This summary is taken from M. Hofinger, *Étude sur le concile de Vaiśālī* [Louvain: Bureaux du Muséon, 1946], pp. 22–148, and also La Vallée Poussin, "The Buddhist Councils," pp. 81–85.
35 He is specifically charged with unauthorized preaching, a *pāyantika* offense.
36 For these rules, as well as their interpretation in the various Hīnayāna schools, see Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, pp. 67–78, W. Pachow, *A Comparative Study of the Prātimokṣa*, in *Sino-Indian Studies* [Volumes IV, 1–4 and V, 1 (1951–1955)], IV, 1, pp. 40–43, and Nalinaksha Dutt, "The Second Buddhist Council," *Indian Historical Quarterly*, XXXV, 1 [March, 1959], pp. 54–56. I am following the Pāli terminology, used by all the above authors as a base.
37 Hofinger, *Étude sur le concile de Vaiśālī*, p. 218.
38 Pachow, *A Comparative Study of the Prātimoksa*, IV, 1, p. 43.
39 R. O. Franke, "The Buddhist Councils at Rājagaha and Vesālī as Alleged in Cullavagga XI., XII.," *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 1908, p. 70. The parentheses are mine.
40 See: Hofinger, *Étude sur le concile de Vaiśālī*, p. 169, and also Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, p. 31.
41 Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, p. 32.
42 See: Hofinger, *Étude sur le concile de Vaiśālī*, pp. 109–111 and 145, and also Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, pp. 32–33.
43 Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, p. 33.
44 Wilhelm Geiger [tr.], *The Mahāvaṃsa, or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon* [reprint; London: Luzac & Company, Ltd. (for P.T.S.), 1964], p. lix, The parentheses are mine.

45 Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, p. 67.
46 *Ibid.*, pp. 68–71 and 74–77, where the points are arranged in two charts.
47 Hofinger, *Étude sur le concile de Vaiśālī*, pp. 216 [and nn. 1–3] and 217 [and nn. 1–6].
48 Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, p. 73.
49 See the account in Hofinger, *Étude sur le concile de Vaiśālī*, pp. 145–148.
50 Paul Demiéville, "À propos du concile de Vaiśālī," *T'oung Pao*, XL [1951], p. 275.
51 Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, pp. 75–78.
52 *Ibid.*, p. 78.
53 Hofinger, *Étude sur le concile de Vaiśālī*, p. 249.
54 Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, p. 87.
55 Demiéville, "À propos du concile de Vaiśālī, p. 258.
56 Hofinger, *Étude sur le concile de Vaiśālī*, pp. 183–195.
57 Przyluski, *Le Concile de Rājagṛha*, pp. 309–314.
58 These statements can be found in Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, pp. 82–83 and 83–84, respectively.
59 See: Hofinger, *Étude sur le concile de Vaiśālī*, p. 256, and also Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, p. 86.
60 Dutt, "The Second Buddhist Council," pp. 52–53.
61 Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya*, pp. 59–65.
62 Dutt, "The Second Buddhist Council," p. 54.
63 Demiéville, "À propos du concile de Vaiśālī," pp. 283–284.
64 *Ibid.*, pp. 259–260.
65 Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, p. 86.
66 *Ibid.*, p. 88.
67 *Ibid.*
68 *Ibid.*, p. 89.
69 See: Hofinger, *Étude sur le concile de Vaiśāli*, p. 173, which presents a convenient chart, as well as Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, p. 92.
70 Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, pp. 89–92.
71 Hofinger, *Étude sur le concile de Vaiśālī*, p. 173.
72 Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, pp. 95–96. The italics are mine.
73 *Ibid.*, p. 104.
74 *Ibid.*, pp. 105–106.
75 *Ibid.*, p. 109.
76 *Ibid.*
77 Edited by S. A. Strong in 1891, and published by The Pali Text Society.
78 Edited by Junjirō Takakusu and Makoto Nagai in 7 volumes between 1924 and 1947, and published by The Pali Text Society.
79 Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, pp. 115–118.
80 *Ibid.*, pp. 119–131.
81 *Ibid.*, pp. 131–132.

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THEORIES CONCERNING THE *SKANDHAKA*

An appraisal

Charles S. Prebish

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The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature. By Erich Frauwallner. Volume VIII of *Serie Orientale Roma*. Edited by Giuseppe Tucci. Rome: Instituto per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1956.

Although Buddhology is notably lacking in secondary literature on the Skandhaka, considerable headway has recently been made through Erich Frauwallner's remarkable monograph, *The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature*. It is not, therefore, altogether unreasonable that an investigation of the Skandhaka must necessarily devote itself, almost exclusively, to an examination of Professor Frauwallner's theories.

Chapters 1 ["The Schools of Buddhism and the Missions of Aśoka"] and 2 ["Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin"] of Frauwallner's study summarize the author's general notions concerning the emergence and relationship of the Buddhist schools, and also provide an insight into the methodology employed to fully integrate the comparative materials to the Vinaya problematic as he views it. Preliminary, however, to a treatment of the subject matter proper, Frauwallner emphasizes the striking similarities between the Sarvāstivādin, Dharmaguptaka, Mahīśāsaka, and Pāli Skandhakas, concluding,

> Such a deep-going agreement leads us to the necessary conclusion that all these texts go back to the same origin. We must therefore accept a common basic work, from which the Vinaya texts of the above mentioned schools are derived. The conclusion in its turn gives rise to some important questions. How did it happen that these schools accepted the same Vinaya? Is it possible in this connection to ascertain the origin and date of the basic text?[1]

Thus we have a clear definition of the problem to which Professor Frauwallner addresses himself, but if we are to understand anything of his presentation, we

must also be made aware of his tacit assumptions, and these seem to be fourfold:[2]

1. The rise of the schools, ... is due to differences of opinion on points of dogma. Discussions on the Vinaya are seldom heard of, play a role of some import only in the so-called second council of Vaiśālī; and there they do not lead to a split into different schools.
2. The spread and development of the Vinaya went on in closest connection with the spread of Buddhism itself. Indeed, every foundation of a new community reposed upon the transmission and application of the monastic rules.
3. Further the Vinaya must have received a particular elaboration probably only in such cases when the community developped [sic] a strong particular life of its own.
4. Such school formations did not necessarily imply a modification of the Vinaya, although it is possible that strongly individualized schools tried to characterize themselves also by external peculiarities in the application of the Vinaya rules.

Although I personally consider point 1 to be, at best, only a half truth, it should be conceded that points 2–4 are certainly feasible. Returning now to a discussion of the Buddhist schools, Frauwallner's position is crystal clear: the Sarvāstivādin, Kāśyapīya, Dharmaguptaka, Mahīśāsaka, and Theravādin schools are absolutely distinct entities, while the Sāṃmatīyas and Mahāsāṃghikas represent groups of schools only, with the individual constituent sects of these latter two schools unmentioned.[3] Several examples are cited to reinforce his point,[4] but Frauwallner's selective choice of sources, a common offense, is clearly revealed. He makes the statement:

> Once more in the case of the Mahāsāṃghika the tradition knows of no separate Vinayas of the single schools, but only of one "Vinaya of the Mahāsāṃghika", a work which, as mentioned above, is preserved in Chinese translation.[5]

This is a very ingenious remark, for with no accompanying explanation, it appears correct. In the *Taishō Tripiṭaka* there is indeed only one "Vinaya of the Mahāsāṃghika." However, the title under which it is preserved seems to be more of a convenience, externally applied, than a choice of the text's compilers. Some Vinaya texts in the Chinese canon are short [the Mahāsāṃghika being one of them], with the Sūtravibhaṅga and Skandhaka being grouped under one rubric, thus the designation referred to by Frauwallner. Other texts, however, such as those of the Mūlasarvāstivādins, are longer and more developed, with the Sūtravibhaṅga and Skandhaka separated and carrying their own respective titles. Here the term "Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin" would

not apply. Admitting the artificiality of the terminology, we find Vinaya texts of at least one Mahāsāṃghika school: the Lokottaravādin. We find, preserved in Sanskrit, a Bhikṣu Prātimokṣa, a Bhikṣuṇī Sūtravibhaṅga, and, if Gustav Roth is correct, a portion of Skandhaka text [called the Bhikṣu Prakīrṇaka].[6] At least the first of these appeared in print before the publication of Frauwallner's study, and the other two, although unedited, were available in manuscript form. One simply cannot refrain from wondering why Frauwallner resorts to such a remarkable gymnastic shuffling of the sects in order to write off the Sāṃmatīyas and Mahāsāṃghikas. The answer is near at hand: Frauwallner feels compelled to trace the origins of the sects to Aśoka's missions, and he has not been able to uncover any information at all which links these two sects to the missionary enterprise. The obvious result: declare them independent traditions; thus, by not dismissing them altogether, they can be drawn upon when the occasion is ripe. Later we shall see that the same technique is employed to conveniently dispose of the Mūlasarvāstivādins, who also cannot be traced to Aśoka's missions.

Frauwallner's motives in developing a discussion of the early Buddhist missionary movement are unusually straightforward. He states:

> In my view everything becomes quite clear once we admit that all these schools were originally communities which owed their foundation to missions in distant countries, and only later developped [sic] (in greater or lesser measure) into schools in the dogmatic sense of the word. This justifies the outstanding importance of the Vinaya in these schools, since the Vinaya naturally played the role of a starting point and a basis when missionary communities were founded. It explains also their well-defined individualities, as circumstances favourable to a separate development prevailed above all in missionary communities which were at a long distance from the centre. Lastly, the close agreement of their Vinaya text can be easily explained once we admit that all these missions started from the same centre, and therefore brought with them the same Vinaya. This single Vinaya was later so modified in the tradition of the various communities, that the result was the rise of several different works, whose uniformity of contents still points to the same origin.[7]

Of course the only large scale missionary movement recorded in the early history of Buddhism was that of Aśoka, primarily recorded in the Dīpavaṃsa, Mahāvaṃsa, and Samantapāsādikā. Now Frauwallner was certainly not the first researcher to suggest a relationship between the Hīnayāna schools and Aśoka's missions. Jean Przyluski, for example, devotes an entire chapter of *Le Concile de Rājagṛha* [Chapter IV: "*Le récits du Premier Concile et l'histoire des sectes bouddhiques*," pp. 307–331] to this and other related problems. Frauwallner however, recasts Przyluski's results [and the similarities between the two presentations are overwhelming] into a new mould, designed to carry the mission-

school relationship to its radical conclusion. The result yields the following concordance:[8]

Mission [number, leader(s), place]	*School Founded*
1. Majjhantika to Gandhāra	Sarvāstivādin
2. Mahādeva to Mahisa Country	Mahīśāsaka
4. Yonaka Dhammarakkhita to Aparantaka 6. Mahārakkhita to the Yonaka Country	Dharmaguptaka
7. Kassapagotta, Majjhima, and Dundubhissara to the Himavanta	Haimavata, Kāśyapīya
9. Mahinda, et. al., to Laṅkā	Theravādin

Up to here, Frauwallner has presented speculative but somewhat supported results. In order to complete his thesis, he must now link the missions to a common geographical starting point, and it is on this last point that he is least convincing. In choosing Vidiśā as the location in question, his argument is threefold:[9]

1. Mahinda's mother was from Vidiśā, and from here he started on his journey to Ceylon.
2. Vidiśā was an important religious center in Aśoka's time.
3. Relics of Dundubhissara, Majjhima, and Kassapagotta were found in stūpas near Vidiśā.

While all three statements are, in fact, true, the conclusion is unwarranted. Here we have perhaps another flaw in Frauwallner's approach: a willingness to accept the preliminary evidence, if favorable to his needs, as conclusive.

In Chapter 2, being bound by a methodology which requires complete use of sources, Frauwallner retraces his steps in order to illustrate why the records of the Mūlasarvāstivādins are both admissible and necessary for a thorough consideration of Skandhaka problematics. The first thing to be done is to establish the Mūlasarvāstivādin school as an early, independent tradition. Assuredly, this is no easy task, for the name of that school appears in the records only from the 7th century A.D. on. Immediately recognizing the futility of a historical treatment, Frauwallner cleverly focuses on textual materials. A passage from the Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa [Ta chih tu lun, *Taishō* 1509, chapter 100, p. 765c2–6] is quoted which identifies two Hīnayāna Vinayas: [1] the Vinaya of Mathurā, 80 sections, including much Avadāna and Jātaka material, and [2] the Vinaya of Kaśmīr, 10 sections, rejecting the Avadāna and Jātaka material. Frauwallner notes:

> It is well known that in the Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa the Hīnayāna is represented by the Sarvāstivādin school; it seems therefore plausible to identify the two Vinayas there cited with the two works of this school

> that have come down to us, viz. the Vinaya of the Sarvāstivādin and of the Mūlasarvāstivādin. And in fact the description given above would suit these two texts. The Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin differentiates itself, as we have seen, from the Vinaya of the Sarvāstivādin by an enormous quantity of fables, which are missing in the latter text. Thus the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin would be the Vinaya of Mathurā, and that of the Sarvāstivādin the Vinaya of Kaśmīr.[10]

Frauwallner's ingenious juggling of the sources fell under severe criticism almost immediately, predominantly by Étienne Lamotte, who incidentally published a French translation of the text in question [*Le Traité de la Grande Vertude Sagesse de Nāgārjuna* (2 vols.; Louvain: Bureaux de Muséon, 1944, 1949)]. Not having the benefit of Lamotte's criticism, one final point remained for Frauwallner: labelling the Mūlasarvāstivādin school as ancient. Towards that goal, he remarks:

> All the comparisons of parallel sections have hitherto shown that the Vinaya of the Sarvāstivādin largely agrees with the Vinaya of the other missionary schools and forms with them a close group, while the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin shows considerable differences. But facts are explained if the Sarvāstivādin, as we believe, had the same origin as the other missionary schools, while the Mūlasarvāstivādin represent an independent older branch of the Sthavira.[11]

The Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya is even referred to by Frauwallner as "an ancient heirloom."[12] Despite his exhaustive presentation, Frauwallner's approach is dangerously close to reducing itself to a "if it's different, it's older" stance. Certainly such a treatment, if, for example, applied to the Śaikṣa section of the Dharmaguptaka Prātimokaṣa, would yield a totally unwarranted and disastrous result. Even if we admit that Frauwallner's presentation is totally correct [which I do not], his conclusion could have been easily reversed: that it was an independent but younger school of Buddhism than those which he associates with Aśoka's missions.

One final point merits comment. In concluding his work on the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya, he summarizes:

> But this Vinaya, in spite of strong differences, shows in its structure and contents such a deep-going agreement with the works hitherto discussed, that we are bound to accept a common origin. So we come to the conclusion that the Vinaya, which the missionary communities received from the parent community in Vidiśā, was not current in Vidiśā only, but enjoyed a wide diffusion, as shown by the instance of the Mathurā community, and probably goes back to an earlier period than the times of Aśoka.[13]

This statement is tantamount to a direct negation of Frauwallner's entire thesis designating Vidiśā as the starting point of the missionary movement. If the Vinaya was widespread, any other center could have been the take-off point, and we should realize that Vidiśā was the not only religious center in Aśoka's kingdom. That Vidiśā was the starting point of Mahinda's mission is attested to by many sources, but in view of Frauwallner's statement, there is no reason to generalize. Mahinda's journey was only one of nine such missions. Further, the relics mentioned name primarily three men: Dundubhissara, Majjhima, and Kassapagotta. The last two names, at least, were not uncommon, and do not necessarily command identification with Aśoka's missionaries. Finally, if the Vinaya was widespread enough to account for the presence of the Mūlasarvāstivādins and Mahāsāṃghikas without the aid of a mission, is not conceivable [or even probable, given the evidence in the huge mass of sectarian literature] that the other Hīnayāna communities emerged in like fashion? What puzzles me is why Professor Frauwallner develops these notions at such length. His later arguments do not really depend on them, and he does, in fact, utilize material from all the Vinayas, regardless of school origin, location, or doctrinal affinity. It seems that Professor Frauwallner must have felt that a major breakthrough had been made regarding the rise of Buddhist schools, but these could have been more appropriately dealt with in an article.

It is only in Chapter 3 ["Origin of the Skandhaka"] that Frauwallner begins to set forth his general theory concerning the Skandhaka. As his theory is bold, innovative, and complex, we had best state his conclusion first and then retrace the steps which led him to it:

> We have to imagine the rise of the old Skandhaka work on the following lines. In the 4th century B.C. some outstanding specialist of the Vinaya undertook to collect in a definitive form the Buddhist monastic rules. He did not limit himself to collecting the material and giving it a clear arrangement, but tried also to put it in a form which would make his work the equal of the great Vedic texts. He placed the single precepts in the mouth of the Buddha, enlivened the exposition in the manner of the Brāhmaṇa texts through inserted legends and knitted the whole into a solid unity, by imbedding it into the framework of a biography of the Buddha. Moreover, in order to bestow on his work the same sanctity as was attached to the Vedic texts which were attributed to the great seers of yore, he invented the legend of the first council, in which the foremost disciples of the Buddha were said to have collected in an authoritative form the words of the Master immediately after his death, and he led the work back to this collection through a list of teachers. In this way he created a work planned and executed on a large scale, which had no rivals in the Buddhist literature of the time and well deserved to be placed to the side of the Vedic texts, and even surpassed them by the logicity of its structure and by its striking framework.[14]

In reconstructing the mainstream of Frauwallner's argument, I shall summarize the cardinal principles [furnishing page references in *The Earliest Vinaya* wherever necessary].

The first point of interest is the biography of the Buddha included in the Skandhaka text. This biography is divided into two parts: [1] the birth and early career of Śākyamuni, and [2] his death and funeral. For reasons which are neither clear nor particularly desirable, Frauwallner treats the Buddha's death first. A consideration of Śākyamuni's demise necessarily begins with an examination of the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra, preserved in the Sūtra Piṭakas of the various schools and providing a detailed account of [1] the Buddha's travels immediately prior to his death, [2] the actual passing into parinirvāṇa, and [3] the funeral arrangements. Here the account stops, but the details which are associated with the next allegedly historical events, namely, the council narratives, are found in the Skandhakas of the various Vinayas. Scholars began to question why the council proceedings, logically following the Buddha's death and funeral, are preserved in a separate text. Oldenberg felt that there was no relation between the two texts, primarily because "the author of the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta did not know anything of the first Council."[15] Louis Finot, in "Mahāparinibbāna-sutta and Cullavagga," took the opposite pose, suggesting that the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta and the council accounts originally constituted a continuous narrative which was somewhat indiscriminately split in two before insertion into the canon.[16] Frauwallner, in confirming Finot's suspicions, provides the following bits of information concerning the Vinayas [pp. 44–45]: two Vinayas [Mūlasarvāstivādin and Mahāsāṃghika] place the entire Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra before the council accounts, three Vinayas [Sarvāstivādin, Dharmaguptaka, and Haimavata] retain large portions of the sūtra before the council accounts, and only two Vinayas [Pāli and Mahīśāsaka] preserve the bare council accounts. The above leads Frauwallner to conclude:

> As we have already seen, this narrative [i.e. the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra] is found, whole or in parts, in all the Vinaya extant. This is in favor of an old established connection. We can even give it a fixed place within the Vinaya. It has been noticed that as a rule it stands at the end of the Vinaya, and at the utmost it is followed by some addenda.[17]

While his conclusion is not totally correct, in view of the material presented, it is significant that in five of the seven Vinayas mentioned, the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra is included [at least in part]. Frauwallner now begins a discussion of Buddha's early life. With two exceptions [Sarvāstivādin and Mahāsāṃghika], all the Vinayas are found to possess a fragment of the Buddha's early career. Although the Sarvāstivādin Vinaya is without this introduction, its parallel is found in the Catuṣpariṣad Sūtra of the Dīrghāgama. Frauwallner views its inclusion in an Āgama text as a process of "crumbling away," identifying

it as "... the same process as with the Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra ..."[18] It must be interjected here that "crumbling away" is really an inadequate term. Rather, it should be kept in mind that when the texts were edited, no so-called "copy-rights" existed. The various redactors of the canon were, for the most part, free to pick and choose whatever materials in the mass of emerging Buddhist literature suited their purposes. Frauwallner also questions why the non-canonical accounts of the life of the Buddha are incomplete, generally conclud-ing where the Skandhaka text does, or perhaps progressing just a bit farther. Indeed, we can anticipate his conclusion [p. 49]: that they are the Vinaya accounts which have been cut loose and become independent. A quotation from the Fo-pên-hsing-chi-ching [*Taishō* 190, chapter 60, p. 932a16–21] is presented which identifies the following titles of biographies and their respective schools [p. 50]:

Text Title	*School*
1. Mahāvastu	Mahāsāṃghika
2. Mahālalitavistara	Sarvāstivādin
3. Buddhajātakanidāna	Kāśyapīya
4. Śākyamunibuddhacarita	Dharmaguptaka
5. Vinayapiṭakamūla	Mahīśāsaka

For Frauwallner, the Mahisasaka title was the clincher, dispelling any doubts he may have entertained concerning the origin of these texts.

Having concluded his discussion of the Buddha's biography, Frauwallner now tackles the problems which naturally follow therefrom: what was the func-tion of the council account and what were the circumstances of its composition? In the first place, the gap between the two councils is filled by a list of patri-archs. At least this is the case with the Pāli and Mūlasarvāstivādin traditions. The Mahāsāṃghika school, on the other hand, preserves a list of teachers. Frauwallner takes this school to be the most archaic, noting.

> But above all it is easily understood how a series of unimportant and soon forgotten teachers was discarded in favor of well known patri-archs, while the contrary is hard to conceive.[19]

Not only is his supposition well taken [and support for the antiquity of this school can be had from scholars such as Pachow, Bareau, Hofinger, and myself (in a forthcoming article on Prātimokṣa)], but it is also critical to our understand-ing of the council accounts. The Mahāsāṃghika teacher list is remarkably similar to the Vedic lists of teachers. Sylvain Lévi has illustrated in "Sur la réci-tation primitive des textes bouddhiques," that Vedic accentuation was still vigor-ously adhered to in the fourth century B.C., and further, that some Skandhaka texts discuss the problem of whether Buddhist texts should be recited in the same manner as the Vedic.[20]

Frauwallner's conclusion:

> The Buddhist text, which thereby introduces in its domain something quite new, gives it in archaic fullness. In my opinion, therefore, the list of teachers of the Vinaya was created on the pattern of and as a counterpart to the Vedic lists of teachers, in order to bestow on the [sic] own tradition an authority similar to the Vedic one.[21]

In concluding this topic Frauwallner states,

> Only in this way the account of the first council can be really understood. It was always agreed that it could not be an historical event. There may have been early attempts to collect the word of the Buddha, but a council in this form immediately after his death is unthinkable. On the other side it was not clear to which purpose such an invention could serve. Everything now becomes comprehensible. This council has been invented in order to place the [sic] own holy tradition under a common authority, to which recourse could be made through a list of teachers on the Vedic model. In this way we can explain both the redaction of the old Skandhaka work in the form of a biography of the Buddha and the account of councils and list of teachers at the end of the work.[22]

Having discussed the origin of the Skandhaka text, Frauwallner presents in Chapter 4 a summary of the Sarvāstivādin, Mahāsāṃghika, Pāli, Mūlasarvāstivādin, and Mahīśāsaka Skandhakas. While the chapter is extremely useful as a guide to comparative study, there would be little purpose served in examining it in detail, as no new theories are advanced.

Chapter 5 ["The Sources of the Old Skandhaka Text and the Earliest Buddhist Tradition"] returns to the line of development arising naturally out of the chapter on the Skandhaka origin. The main topic of the chapter, as indicated in the title, leads Frauwallner to some of his most creative and innovative theories, but unfortunately, it is here that he is weakest. The first notion which he advances is that there was,

> . . . an old account, in which the Buddha gave to his first disciples in Benares the fundamental instructions for the life of a Buddhist monk. This account was known to the author of the Skandhaka work and was utilized by him.[23]

How was Frauwallner led to this most novel thesis? Four examples are necessary. [1] In the Bhaiṣajyavastu of the Dharmaguptaka and Mahīśāsaka Vinayas, five monks ask the Buddha about food, and he says that only alms should be eaten. [2] Also in the Dharmaguptaka Bhaiṣajyavastu, the five monks ask about

medicines, and are told that only urine may be used. [3] In the Cīvaravastu of the Dharmaguptaka and Sarvāstivādin Vinayas, the five monks ask about clothes, and are informed that they should use rags. [4] In the Śayanāsanavastu of the Dharmaguptaka and Sarvāstivādin Vinayas, the same five monks are advised to dwell at the foot of trees. Primarily because these stories, outlining the well known four niśrayas, are: [1] located [with one exception] in Benares, a city not often mentioned in the Skandhaka, [2] abrupt and isolated, [3] simple with regard to the instructions given, and [4] uncluttered by mass meetings of monks, Frauwallner concludes, concerning the five monks: "they are the five monks whom the Buddha wins as disciples on his first standing forth as teacher in Benares, and who form his first community."[24] From here it is only a short leap to his earlier stated thesis. Frauwallner however, has overlooked the fact that the five monks in Buddha's earliest community are well known in the various texts. Even their names are well attested to: Ājñātakauṇḍinya, Aśvajit, Vāṣpa, Mahānāman, and Bhadrika. If, in fact, these same five monks were intended in the accounts cited by Frauwallner, they most certainly would have been identified by name. Fortunately, not all of Frauwallner's assumptions are so speculative. He assumes that the Skandhaka author drew on the tradition preserved in the Sūtravibhaṅga,[25] and here he is on more favorable ground. An example shall suffice to illustrate the point. In the Prātimokṣa, a monk is held culpable of the tenth saṃghāvaśeṣa offense if, despite a threefold admonition, he persists in attempting a schism. The Sūtravibhaṅga relates a story concerning Devadatta in which this troublesome figure seeks to split the order through the imposition of more rigid monastic rule. After his proposal is rejected by the Buddha, Devadatta does not heed the threefold admonition, thus being guilty of a saṃghāvaśeṣa offense. The story related in the Skandhaka is at considerable variance with the one cited above. In the Skandhaka the story is more developed with Devadatta setting up a community of his own [consisting of 500 monks]. Only through the intervention of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana are the schismatic monks led back into the fold. There is no doubt, according to Frauwallner, that the Skandhaka text represents an amplification of the Sūtravibhaṅga.

Up to now we have only been considering the earlier Vinaya sources utilized by the Skandhaka author. Now we must make correspondences between the sūtra-like passages in the Skandhaka and their Sūtra Piṭaka counterparts. For this purpose, Frauwallner chooses the Poṣadhasthāpanavastu.[26] The story line is brief: Buddha refuses to recite the Prātimokṣa Sūtra at the Poṣadha ceremony because an impure monk is present in the assembly. After Maudgalyāyana removes the unworthy monk, Buddha preaches a sermon comparing the eight marvelous qualities of his doctrine to the eight marvelous qualities of the sea. This sermon is found in the Aṅguttara Nikāya [VIII, 20, corresponding to Madhyamāgama 37], and at first glance, the sūtra appears to have been lifted from the Vinaya, as the introductory narrative functions only in the Vinaya. However, a second text relating the same subject content, the Asura Sūtra, stands in close

proximity to the first.[27] The Asura Sūtra presents the following story line: Pahārādo, the Asura Prince, comes to the Buddha and is questioned on the eight marvelous qualities of the sea. Buddha then relates the eight marvelous qualities of his doctrine. Frauwallner contends that the Skandhaka author has borrowed from the Asura Sūtra, recasting it to fit his needs [p. 147]. He bases his conclusion on what seems to be an overlooked detail, namely, that the eight qualities which cause the Asuras to like the sea, and have meaning only in the conversation between Buddha and Pahārādo [which is omitted in the Vinaya account], are preserved in the Vinaya texts of three schools: the Dharmaguptaka, Mahīśāsaka, and Theravādin. He summarizes:

> The oldest text is the Asurasūtra. This was known to the author of the Skandhaka and he utilized it for his work, by enclosing it in another frame work. Later, as a result of the above mentioned tendency to levelling and completing, its recast was taken once more into the Sūtrapiṭaka where it came to rest side by side with the original Sūtra.[28]

It is difficult to see how this sort of approach can be endorsed, and had Frauwallner not presented more substantial proof, we would have been obligated to dismiss his notions concerning the Skandhaka author's use of the sūtras. Fortunately, in the account of the Śroṇa Koṭīkarṇa legend [in the Carmavastu], a textual series known collectively as the Arthavargīyāṇi Sūtrāṇi is mentioned. Further, the account is present in all the versions.[29]

Chapter 6, "The Biography of the Buddha and the Beginnings of the Buddhist Church History," returns to a development of Frauwallner's earlier theories concerning the Vinayic accounts of Buddha's life history. In concluding his work, Frauwallner presents an Appendix outlining the structure of the Vinayas of the major Hīnayāna sects.

In looking back over Professor Frauwallner's work, we can certainly say that much of his research rests on his own creative genius and ability to truly "read between the lines." Of course some of his theories are a bit far-fetched and overly speculative, and Lamotte is right when he says,

> *L'admirable travail du professeur Frauwallner dont on vient de donner un bref résumé marque un progrès considérable dans notre connaissance des sources bouddhiques, mais ses conclusions ne peuvent être acceptées sans restrictions.*[30]

Nevertheless, Frauwallner's exhaustive presentation must be vigorously applauded. He has shown us in his work that comparative Vinaya study is an exciting field, filled with all the snares and traps that make research in this area both challenging and rewarding. While some of his Skandhaka theories may, in the course of time, not stand up to criticisms [such as those raised above], his study will most probably remain the standard work on the Skandhaka for the

immediate future. Coupled with Pachow's *A Comparative Study of the Prātimokṣa*, I would cite it as must reading for those wishing to understand the context in which Buddhist monastic discipline developed.

Notes

1 Erich Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature* [Rome: Instituto per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1956], p. 4.
2 *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6. These are direct quotations taken out of context and rearranged by me for illustrative presentation.
3 This material is assembled on pp. 7–12 of Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya*.
4 For example: Hsüan-tsang's study of the Abhidharma of the Mahāsāṃghika, Hsüan-tsang's reference to the texts of the Mahāsāṃghikas and Sāṃmatīyas, and the mention only of Vatsīputrīya-Sāṃmatīya when doctrinal theories are discussed.
5 Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya*, p. 10.
6 See: W. Pachow and Ramakanta Mishra [edd.], "The Prātimokṣa Sūtra of the Mahāsāṃghikas," *journal of the Gangānāth Jhā Research Institute*, X, 1–4 [November–February–May–August, 1952–1953], Appendix 1–48, and also Gustav Roth, "Bhikṣuṇīvinaya and Bhikṣu-Prakīrṇaka and Notes on the Language," *Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, LII, 1–4 [January–December, 1966], 29–51.
7 Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya*, p. 12.
8 For an account of the missions, see, for example: Wilhelm Geiger [tr.], *The Mahāvaṇisa, or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon* [reprint; London: Luzac & Company, Ltd. (for P.T.S.), 1964], pp. 82–87 [Chapter XII]. The non-critical missions have been excluded in the chart. For Frauwallner's conclusions, see: *The Earliest Vinaya*, pp. 13–23.
9 Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya*, pp. 18–19.
10 *Ibid.*, p. 27.
11 *Ibid.*, p. 38.
12 *Ibid.*, p. 41.
13 *Ibid.*
14 *Ibid.*, p. 65.
15 Hermann Oldenberg [ed.], *The Vinaya Piṭakaṃ* [5 vols., reprint; London: Luzac & Company, Ltd. (for P.T.S.), 1964], I, p. xxviii.
16 Louis Finot, "Mahāparinibbāna-sutta and Cullavagga," *Indian Historical Quarterly*, VIII, 2 [June, 1932], 241–246.
17 Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya*, p. 45. The brackets are mine.
18 *Ibid.*, p. 49.
19 *Ibid.*, p. 61.
20 In *Journal Asiatique*, Série XI, Tome V [Janvier–Février, 1915], 401–447.
21 Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya*, p. 62.
22 *Ibid.*, pp. 64–65.
23 *Ibid.*, p. 135.
24 *Ibid.*, p. 134.
25 *Ibid.*, pp. 136–144.
26 The whole argument is recounted on pp. 146–148 of Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya*.
27 *Ibid.*, p. 147. We are told that the Asura Sūtra is Aṅguttara Nikāya VIII, 19, corresponding to Madhyamāgama 35 and also Ekottarikāgama 42, 4.
28 *Ibid.*, p. 148.
29 *Ibid.*, p. 149 [and n. 2]. Frauwallner does note one exception in the naming of the

sūtra series. The Sarvāstivādins mention the Pārāyaṇa and Satyadarśa Sūtras. For other early texts, Frauwallner refers the reader to Sylvain Lévi's "Sur la récitation primitive des textes bouddhiques," pp. 412 ff.

30 Étienne Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien des origines à l'ère Śaka* [Louvain: Publication Universitaires, 1958], p. 195.

16

THE PRĀTIMOKṢA PUZZLE

Fact versus fantasy

Charles S. Prebish

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"The Prātimokṣa Puzzle: Fact Versus Fantasy" deals exclusively with some of the problems inherent in Buddhological research devoted to the Prātimokṣa or monastic code for the monks and nuns. Concentrating on historical issues, the development of the Prātimokṣa as a ritual liturgy, and the differences in the various Hīnayāna Prātimokṣa Sūtras extant, the article seeks to review and evaluate a substantial portion of previous researchers' conclusions about this important but often overlooked area of Buddhist literature, questioning some long accepted but perhaps unfounded notions and offering some speculative new considerations based on the author's study of the texts of primarily four Hīnayāna sects (Mūlasarvāstivādins, Mahāsāṃghikas, Sarvāstivādins, and Theravādins) which have preserved Vinaya traditions in Indic languages. The basic premise is that while the texts have for the most part been assumed to be homogeneous and consonant with one another, there are substantial differences, both in form and content, as well as linguistic, which may add considerably to our knowledge of early Buddhist religious history in general and the differences in the various Hīnayāna sects in particular.

Properly speaking, the Vinaya Piṭaka of the Buddhist canon is composed of three parts: Sūtravibhaṅga, Skandhaka, and Appendices. No consideration of the structure of the Vinaya, however, would be complete without a careful study of the Prātimokṣa and Karmavācanās, which although not being considered canonical in the strictest sense of the word, may be handled under the heading of Paracanonical Vinaya literature.[1] It is my intention in this paper, due to the glaring lack of interpretive material in the corpus of modern, scholarly Buddhological literature, to deal with some of the problematics inherent in Prātimokṣa study. The "Prātimokṣa Puzzle," as I see it, revolves around three central problems: [1] historical issues—the original meaning of the Prātimokṣa, and its nature, content, and function; [2] development of the Prātimokṣa as a ritual liturgy; and [3] differences in the Hīnayāna Prātimokṣa Sūtras extant. These we can proceed to take in order.

Although etymological explanations of the term *Prātimokṣa* remain speculative, and for the most part, beside the point, some of the leading notions should be reviewed, the reasons for which shall soon become apparent. Rhys Davids and Oldenberg derive *Prātimokṣa* from *prati* √*muc*, taken in the sense of disburdening or getting free.[2] E. J. Thomas also favors derivation from √*muc*, but he renders it "that which binds, obligatory."[3] Winternitz associated the word with redemption, based primarily on his reading of the Jātakas.[4] Dr. Pachow notes,

> In the Chinese and Tibetan translations, this is interpreted as: Deliverance, liberation or emancipation for each and every one and at all occasions, that is 'prati' stands for 'each, every' and 'mokṣa' for 'Deliverance,'[5]

and so the derivations from √*muc* go on and on. Over against this, we find the evidence of the Pāli Mahāvagga, declaring Pātimokkha [the Pāli equivalent of the Sanskrit Prātimokṣa] to be the face, the head of all good dharmas [*mukhaṃ etaṃ, pamukhaṃ etaṃ kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ*].[6] With the exception of the Mahāvagga passage, each of our western interpreters seems to commit one huge error in his interpretation of the term: etymological judgement was colored by the preconceived notion that Prātimokṣa, since it was a monastic code, had to be rendered accordingly. What if Prātimokṣa, at the inception of the word into Buddhist vocabulary, had nothing to do with the outline and confession of offenses? Sukumar Dutt throws considerable light on this suggestion by interpreting Prātimokṣa in a quite different sense. He notes,

> Pātimokkha, however, can be equated to Skt. Prātimokṣa, which from its etymological parts lends itself to interpretation as something serving for a bond, the prefix Prati meaning "against" and the root Mokṣa meaning "scattering" (kṣepaṇe iti kavikalpadrumaḥ), though I have not been able to discover any instance of the use of the word precisely in this sense in Sanskrit. I should prefer to take the etymological interpretation of the word as bond . . .[7]

In order to determine what led Dr. Dutt to such a bold statement, so obviously abandoning the orthodoxy of the time, we are necessarily led to an examination of the Prātimokṣa's original nature, content, and function, as the two problems are thoroughly intertwined. Dr. Dutt assesses the state of the early Buddhist saṃgha:

> The Buddhist Sangha existed originally as a sect of the Parivrājaka community of the sixth century B.C., and it rested on the basis of a common Dhamma and had at first no special Vinaya of its own. It is impossible to say at what point of time, but certainly very early in its history, the sect of the Buddha, the Cātuddisa Bhikkhu-sangha, devised an external bond of union: it was called Pātimokkha.[8]

What was the nature and content of this earliest Prātimokṣa? Three verses in the Mahāpadāna Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya provide a brief glimpse. The first two verses relate that at the end of each six year period the monks are enjoined to journey to the town of Bandhumatī to recite the Prātimokṣa. The translation of the Prātimokṣa is as follows:

> Enduring patience is the highest austerity,
> Nirvāṇa is the highest say the Buddhas;
> For he who injures others is not a monk,
> He who violates others is not a śrāmaṇa.
> Not to do any evil, to attain good, to purify one's own mind;
> This is the Teaching of the Buddhas.
> Not speaking against others, not harming others,
> And restraint according to the Prātimokṣa;
> Moderation in eating, secluded dwelling, and the practice of adhicitta;
> This is the Teaching of the Buddhas.[9]

These verses are not distinct to the Dīgha Nikāya. They also appear as verses 183–185 of the Dhammapada, but even more significantly, are amongst the verses appended to the Prātimokṣa Sūtras of the various schools. It is not unreasonable to suppose that each verse (of those appended to the Prātimokṣa Sūtras) represented the original Prātimokṣa of a particular Buddha,[10] the favorability of this hypothesis being heightened by the fact that at least one version of a Prātimokṣa Sūtra (the Sanskrit Mahāsāṃghika text) refers to *each verse* as a Prātimokṣa.[11] I conjecture that the inclusion of these verses in the fully developed Prātimokṣa Sūtras of the various schools represents an admission of the earlier form of Prātimokṣa, designed to provide the mature texts with added religious and historical authority. Regarding the function of the earliest Prātimokṣa, Dutt remarks,

> The Buddhist Sangha had rested originally on a community of faith and belief, on a Dhamma, but an external bond of union, a Pātimokkha, was afterwards devised serving to convert the Sect into a religious Order, and this Pātimokkha originally consisted in periodical meeting for the purpose of confirming the unity of the Buddha's monk-followers by holding a communal confession of faith in a set form of hymn singing. This custom seems to me to be indicated by the story of Vipassī [Vipaśyin].[12]

It is beyond doubt that relatively early in the history of the Buddhist saṃgha the Prātimokṣa evolved into a monastic code, eventually developing into a formalized ritual. Sukumar Dutt seems to think that the Prātimokṣa as bond or union being transformed into a monastic code took place shortly after Buddha's death, his reasoning being founded on his reading of the account of the council of Rājagṛha, in the Pāli Vinaya, about which he says,

> The canonical account of this "council," as I have already suggested, cannot be relied upon. It is based on a vague tradition of what happened in the long, long past. But we may read it between the lines. In the reported proceedings, the term, Pātimokkha, is nowhere mentioned, but all the heads of misdemeanour on the part of a Bhikkhu are listed except the Sekhiyas (Skt. Śaikṣas) and the procedural rules of Adhikaraṇasamatha (Skt. Adhikaraṇa-śamatha). The reason for the studied omission of the word, Pātimokkha, is not far to seek if we assume that at the time when the proceedings were put into shape, the Bhikkhus understood by Pātimokkha something quite different from a code of Vinaya rules . . . The code, whatever its original contents, became after the First Council the bond of association of the Buddhist Bhikkhus, and was called Pātimokkha (Bond). Thus the old name for a confession of faith came to be foisted on something new, a code of Prohibitions for a Bhikkhu.[13]

Obviously, rules for conduct existed previously, many probably even propounded by the Buddha, but these had not been as yet codified into a rigid structure. On this point, Dr. Pachow notes,

> Gautama Buddha, of course, was a reformer in some respects but as the conventional conception of morality had been so well established before his time, that he had simply to accept their fundamental principles, and cast new rules in order to suit the requirements of his disciples, under unusual circumstances.[14]

After Buddha's death, and most probably after the alleged first council, the monks set out to gather together those precepts, outlined by Upāli as Vinaya, into a code. There is no mistaking the existence of this bare code. For example, in the Nikāyas we repeatedly find terms such as *pātimokkha-saṃvara-saṃvuto* ("constrained by the restraints of the Pātimokkha") and the like.[15] In addition, the ritual formulary preceding the Prātimokṣa as we have it today is found not in the Sūtravibhaṅga, as we should expect, but in the Poṣadhavastu of the Skandhaka, a section where it seems out of place.[16] Sukumar Dutt goes as far as to say, "The Sutta-Vibhaṅga (Skt. Sūtra-Vibhaṅga), in fact, regards the Pātimokkha as a mere code, while the Mahāvagga regards it as a liturgy."[17] In addition to the introductory formulary being out of place in the bare Prātimokṣa code, the interrogatory formula, concluding each category of rules, also do not fit. An example of this last point might be taken with regard to the *adhikaraṇa-śamatha dharmas*. No offenses are actually stated, hence the declaration of purity following these rules is indeed superfluous.[18] More shall be said on the ritual formulary and interrogatory portions of the text later.

Before we examine the actual process by which the Prātimokṣa developed into a formalized ritual, two further points need emphasis: [1] the flexibility of

the Prātimokṣa during its formative period, and [2] the relative date of its finalized root form as a monastic code. Regarding the flexibility of the emerging Prātimokṣa code, we have some evidence that the earliest form of the code contained a considerably smaller number of rules than the final form. Although Pachow cites the Sammatīya Prātimokṣa to contain only about 200 rules,[19] our most reliable source in the numbers game seems to be the Pāli. In its final form this Pātimokkha contains 227 rules. However, several sources indicate a figure of something more than 150 *śikṣāpadas* [*sādhikaṃ diyaḍḍhasikkhāpadasataṃ*].[20] Several scholars have entertained a series of arithmetic gymnastics in explaining the disparity of 77 rules (plus or minus). B. C. Law, for example, suspects that because the *adhikaraṇa-śamatha dharmas* were unnamed at the first council, as well as the *śaikṣa dharmas*, they may have been later additions. In order to arrive at the proper number, he disposes of the former group somehow and declares the correct figure to be 152 (i.e., 227 total rules minus 75 *śaikṣa* dharmas; if he also subtracted the *adhikaraṇa-śamatha dharmas*, he would end up below 150).[21] Dr. Pachow, in *A Comparative Study of the Prātimokṣa*, points out the futility of such approaches, noting that some of the *śaikṣa* material is extremely old.[22] Other ploys to account for the roughly 150 rules, perhaps just as ridiculous, might have been set forth. For example, if one charts the place at which each rule is said to have been promulgated, we discover that an overwhelming majority (roughly 170) were set forth at Śrāvastī. This figure is no more unreasonable than the others suggested, especially in view of the Pāli qualifier *sādhikaṃ* ("something more than"), and probably could be further supported by emphasizing the many rainy seasons spent there by the Buddha. This hypothesis was most likely not employed because scholars generally ascribe very little reliability to place names mentioned in the Pāli canon. From another perspective, Dutt notes,

> Then, again, the classification of offences does not appear to have been made on any initially recognized principle, but is more or less haphazard and promiscuous suggesting, if not actually later additions and alterations, at least the elasticity of the original code which offered opportunities for them.[23]

In view of the above, we can tentatively propose several conclusions concerning the date of the earliest root Prātimokṣa text. Firstly, the oldest portions of this text, indeed very ancient, may date from 500–450 B.C. Due to the flexibility of the early text, its period of growth to completion must have taken a considerable period of time, perhaps 50 to 100 years. Thus it was probably in final root form by about 400 B.C. Accepting Oldenberg's thesis that the Sūtravibhaṅga was a later expansion of the Prātimokṣa, commenting on the precepts included therein,[24] we can assume that the Sūtravibhaṅga was composed a short period after the completion of the Prātimokṣa. However short this period may have been, it was certainly significant, for by the time of the composition of the

Sūtravibhaṅga, no new additions to the Prātimokṣa were admitted, thus accounting for the new terms for offenses mentioned in the Sūtravibhaṅga: *sthūlātyaya* [grave offense], *duṣkṛia* [light offense], and *durbhāṣita* [offense of improper speech]. Clearly, by the time of the completion of the Skandhaka, the Prātimokṣa had already developed into a ritual text, regarded as such by the former.

The ritual form of the Prātimokṣa is intimately bound up with the Buddhists' acceptance and observance of the Poṣadha ceremony. The story, of course, is a familiar one, related in the Poṣadhavastus of the various Vinayas. Buddha altered the ceremony, as traditionally accepted, to suit his followers' needs:

> But, the Buddha's injunction to his disciples regarding the observance of this ceremony of Uposatha (Skt. Poṣadha) was that, instead of discussing the Dharma which was also conceded later on among themselves only, they should recite on this particular day the "Sikkhāpadas" (Skt. Śikṣāpadas) embodying the code of rules for their own guidance, to be henceforward known as the Pātimokkha.[25]

Dr. Dutt comments on this change in function of the ceremony,

> But though the Uposatha observance was a widespread popular custom, the Buddhist Bhikkhus adapted it to their own uses and purposes: they made it fit in with their congregational life. Its form was changed; it became a confessional service, an instrument of monastic discipline.[26]

At first, the *only* business of the Poṣadha ceremony was the Prātimokṣa recital.[27] Accordingly, the bare Prātimokṣa text had to be transmuted into liturgical form. The first thing necessary was to add an introduction (*nidāna*) to the text. This *nidāna* is spoken by an elder competent monk who first calls the saṃgha to order, announces the recitation of the Prātimokṣa to be at hand, calls for the careful attention of the saṃgha, extols the confession of faults, denotes silence as an affirmation of innocence, and emphasizes conscious lying as an impediment to a monk's progress.[28] However, it is essential to note that in addition to the above, the elder monk, before calling for the careful attention of the monks, remarks that the first duty of the saṃgha is to declare complete purity.[29] That declaration of complete purity, *pariśuddhi*, is a prerequisite to the Prātimokṣa Sūtra recitation is attested to elsewhere. In the Poṣadhasthāpanavastu, the Buddha refuses to recite the Prātimokṣa because one of the monks present in the assembly is not completely pure.[30] If the Prātimokṣa recitation, in fact, served anything more than a purely ritual function, why must complete purity be declared *before* the ceremony? With pre-announced complete purity, the only offenses subject to confession during the actual recitation would be those which were remembered while the recitation was in progress or those concealed previously, but now confessed. Both of these cases were likely to be the excep-

tion rather than the rule. At the conclusion of the *nidāna* we find a statement indicating that there is comfort (*phāsu*), i.e., absolution, for one confessing a previously unconfessed fault, thus adding to our premise of the artificiality and purely ritual function of the ceremony, for the possibility of an offense for which confession would not suffice (such as a *pārājika dharma*) is not entertained at all. After adding the *nidāna* to the bare text, the next requisite was to add interrogatory portions at the end of each class of rules. These statements consisted of a threefold repetition of the question: "Are you completely pure in this matter?" Immediately following the interrogation was the declaration of the elder monk: "Since there is silence, the Venerable Ones are completely pure in this matter. Thus do I understand." Apparently the confession of even one fault is not anticipated by the Prātimokṣa leader, again illustrating the solely ritualistic function of the formulary. I have already pointed out above that the interrogatory text is utterly misplaced after the *adhikaraṇa-śamatha* portion of the Prātimokṣa, but mention it here only to conjecture that it was incorporated to maintain the symmetry of the ritual. In addition to the *nidāna* and the interrogatory sections added to the root text, verses before and after the text were included, many of these corresponding to the speculated Prātimokṣas of the previous six Buddhas, as well as that of Śākyamuni Gautama. Schayer's comment on the inclusion of unusual passages in the formalized texts is particularly pertinent here:

> There arises a further question: why have those texts not been suppressed in spite of their contradictory non-canonical character? There is only one answer: evidently they have been transmitted by a tradition old enough and considered to be authoritative by the compilers of the canon.[31]

Later, when other functions were added to the Poṣadha ceremony, such as monastic decisions carried out according to the Karmavācanā method, Prātimokṣa recital began to occupy only a lesser position.[32]

Having now followed the development of the root Prātimokṣa to its finalized ritual form, we are ready to examine the differences between the versions extant in the various schools. Sukumar Dutt has noted,

> A comparison of the Pali version of the Pātimokkha with the Chinese and the Tibetan shows differences, both numerical and substantial, in the Pācittiya (Skt. Pāyantika) and Sekhiya (Skt. Śalkṣa) rules, the greater discrepancy being under the latter head.[33]

Although Dr. Dutt makes no reference to the Sanskrit texts, which is understandable since the book quoted from was written in 1924, when Sanskrit Vinaya study was still in its infancy, he does set forth the two categories basic to an understanding of the differences in the various Hīnayāna Prātimokṣas. Taking

the former first, and I shall confine myself to the Bhikṣu Prātimokṣa Sūtras,[34] we find that the Theravādin and Mahāsāṃghika texts preserve 92 rules instead of the 90 found in the other versions. In the Pāli text, pāyantikas 23 and 82 are added. The first rule [23] relates to admonishing nuns, while the second [82] concerns confiscating saṃgha property for individual use.[35] In attempting to resolve the problem, Pachow remarks,

> Our answer to this would be that some of the schools did not adopt the Pali (Sthavira) V. 23 and 82, probably on the ground that the Pali V. 21, 22, and 81 are similar to them in nature, it was therefore, thought advisable to leave them out.[36]

The rules Pachow mentions are indeed similar to the two rules under discussion, and he has provided a thoroughly reasonable explanation of their omission in the other texts. However, he then goes on to say, "And probably a round number like 90 would be easier to remember and better to calculate!"[37] Surely Dr. Pachow must realize that when other categories of rules carry such unrounded numbers as 4, 13, 2, and 7, there would have been little concern for the distinction between 90 and 92. As for the second half of his statement, I must admit that I have no idea at all as to what he might be talking about, since it is painfully obvious that monks did not calculate the rules; rather, they merely recited them. Coming now to the extra two Mahāsāṃghika rules, we find that they correspond exactly to the Theravādin additions (Mahāsāṃghika 23 to Theravādin 23 and Mahāsāṃghika 91 to Theravādin 82). The same explanation for their exclusion holds: rule 23 is similar to rules 21 and 22, while rule 91 is covered by rule 9.

The *śaikṣa dharma* section is where the schematic numbering variance becomes acute. We find the smallest number of items in the Chinese Mahāsāṃghika text [66] and the largest in the Chinese Sarvāstivādin version [113]. In trying to resolve the variance of such widespread discord, both in numbering pattern and content, scholars have resorted to diverse techniques. Dr. Pachow supplies the following explanation, to be equally applied to the pāyantika section:

> This shows i). That when the schools used to be located at different places: the Sarvāstivādins at Kashmir, the Mahāsāṅghikas at Pāṭaliputra, the Sthaviras at Rājagṛha and so forth, it seemed inevitable for them to follow the order of rules rather loosely, because they had probably lacked the necessary writing material and had solely to depend on a powerful memory. ii). That as there is no specific number of the Śaikṣa dharmas, the schools were at liberty to add to them according to their wish. This brought about the discrepancy between the texts of the various schools. iii). That the schools claiming a very old origin show great discrepancy in regard to the number of rules. For instance, the

> Mahāsg. schools in general, agree with the Pali text so far as the order of the rules is concerned. But it suddenly jumps in a striking manner from 51 to 61, 5 to 63, 8 to 80! Nobody would be inclined to believe that it is older because of such peculiarities.[38]

There is some validity in the first two of Pachow's arguments . . . at least more than he prefers to develop. While his writing materials thesis is weak, as we are still considering an oral tradition, the diversity of saṃgha sites could indeed foster local distinctions, bred by possible lack of communication between the schools. In addition, his second notion, the adding of rules to the *śaikṣa* section (and he should have also mentioned the likelihood of subtracting rules), coincides well with the flexibility hypothesis outlined earlier in this paper. Instead, Pachow elects to develop the third point in his statement. This is especially astonishing after reading the final sentence of the quotation. At once it is obvious that the supposedly old schools appear to exhibit such a discrepancy in the number and ordering of rules only because Pachow has chosen to measure them against *his* root text: the Chinese Sarvāstivādin version. Had Pachow taken the Mahāsāṃghika or Theravādin text as his basic text, the converse conclusion would have resulted. Pachow is led astray by the verity, now traditional in Buddhology, that the Mahāsāṃghika and Theravādin traditions are older than the Sarvāstivādin, and he felt compelled to prove it at any cost, even if this meant resorting to artificial means and arithmetic nonsense. A perusal of his tables and charts bears this out.[39]

A more sensible approach would be the developmental, concentrating more on the contents of the various rules than their numbers. In considering the texts with which I have worked most closely, namely, the Sanskrit Mahāsāṃghika, Mūlasarvāstivādin, and Sarvāstivādin versions, and the Theravādin (preserved in Pāli), this technique proves quite instructive. These texts contain 67, 108, 113,[40] and 75 rules, respectively, but we find on comparison that there are primarily only four areas in which the texts with a large number of rules differ from those with a small number:

1. The robe section
2. The section on village visiting
3. The section on Dharma instruction
4. The section on eating.

In the Mahāsāṃghika and Theravādin robe sections, we find only two rules: one stating that the inner robe (*nivāsana*) should be worn wrapped around, the other issuing the same advice for the (outer) robe (*cīvara*). The Mūlasarvāstivādin and Sarvāstivādin versions elaborate greatly here, providing intricate details as to how the robe should not be worn. For the first two mentioned schools, a simple positive affirmation concerning the robes sufficed. The expansion of these rules in the second two schools seems to indicate that they were either more

concerned about monastic dress from the outset, or developed a more thorough series of prohibitions at a later time because the earlier, simple regulations did not suffice and were abused. In the second category the same growth can be observed. While the Mahāsāṃghika and Theravādin versions have 21 and 24 rules, respectively, dealing with behavior in the village, the Mūlasarvāstivādins have 29 and the Sarvāstivādins 39. The major difference in the more extended versions seems to center on various unbecoming postures which the monk might assume. Either the last two schools were originally more concerned than the first two with the general conduct of monks in a village, or they observed over a period of time, an alienation of the laity, precipitated by the unsatisfactory manners of the monks. A thorough and definitive understanding of this second division would insist on a better demarcation of the monastic-lay relationship than we now possess. In the section on Dharma instruction we find that the Mahāsāṃghika text contains 16 rules, the Theravādin 16, the Sarvāstivādin 21, and the Mūlasarvāstivādin 26. The Mūlasarvāstivādin and Sarvāstivādin texts seem simply to list more conditions under which Dharma instruction was inappropriate. Perhaps the Mahāsāṃghikas and Theravādins, in their zeal to promote Dharma, were more indiscriminate regarding the conditions under which Dharma was preached, or perhaps the Sarvāstivādins and Mūlasarvāstivādins observed that it was just impractical to, for example, preach Dharma to someone who was on horseback (unless the rider was ill and could only receive Dharma instruction in this way). However, it is also possible that difficulties arose from random Dharma preaching, and the Mūlasarvāstivādins and Sarvāstivādins sought to eliminate these by refining the circumstances under which teaching could *respectfully* occur. Further, if the Mūlasarvāstivādin and Sarvāstivādin schools represent newer factions in the Buddhist saṃgha, a likely suggestion, it is quite possible that Dharma preaching had developed, in the course of time, into a more fully matured enterprise, replete with added restrictions for its undertaking. A similar argument could be set forth with regard to the section on eating: Mūlasarvāstivādin 39 rules, Sarvāstivādin 21, Mahāsāṃghika 25, and Theravādin 30. Without playing the numbers game, we see that of the 41 rules which vary between the Mahāsāṃghika and Mūlasarvāstivādin schools, no less than 40 rules may be speculated to be developmental advancements, indicating a lapse of some unknown time span between the finalization of these two texts. I might add that these two texts were selected for comparison because the Mahāsāṃghika text has the fewest number of rules and the Mūlasarvāstivādin the most, having cited in note 40 the problems surrounding the Sanskrit Sarvāstivādin text which, in my opinion, make it an unwise choice for generalization. What obviously needs to be undertaken is a careful study of the deviant rules in this section of the Hīnayāna Prātimokṣa Sūtras, combining the evidence obtained with other bits of monastic history preserved in various other sources. To date, I know of only one study attempting even a portion of this task: André Bareau's "La Construction et le Culte des Stūpa d'après les Vinayapiṭaka," in *Bulletin De L'École Française D'Extrême-Orient* [L, 2 (1962), pp. 229–274]. In spite of its restricted scope the

results are remarkable. To this point in our examination of the differences in the Hīnayāna Prātimokṣas we have been following Dr. Dutt's lead, concerning ourselves only with a study of the pāyantika and śaikṣa dharma sections. Now we must have a brief look into the other sections, pointing out, despite their numerical agreement in all the schools, some considerable bits of diversity.

In examining the remaining sections of the Bhikṣu Prātimokṣa Sūtras, it is not my intention to point out all the differences between the respective versions of the various schools. Such a task would go far beyond the limits of the current enterprise. Instead, I have selected two sets of regulations which are illustrative of the type of developmental progression of which I have spoken previously, namely:

1. Refinement of the monastic dwelling
2. The status of the *upāsikā* (laywoman).

For the first issue, we shall concern ourselves with the sixth and seventh saṃghāvaśeṣa dharmas. As the entire sixth rule is rather lengthy, I shall reproduce only the critical portion of it as it appears in the texts with which I have worked most closely (i.e., the Mahāsāṃghika, Sarvāstivādin, and Mūlasarvāstivādin versions in Sanskrit, and the Theravādin in Pāli). Disregarding any slight grammatical differences between the texts, the translation is:

> When a monk, by begging himself, is having a hut built, having no donor and intended for himself, the hut should be built according to measure.

There is certainly nothing problematic here. However, when we read the following rule, the picture begins to change. For all but the Mūlasarvāstivādin text, the translation is clear enough:

> When a monk is having a large vihāra built, with a donor and intended for himself . . .

However, in the Mūlasarvāstivādin text, *atmoddeśikaṃ* ("intended for himself") has been replaced by *saṃghoddeśakaṃ* ("intended for the saṃgha"). Three conclusions seem possible:

1. It may be the result of an error or oversight by the compiler.
2. The fact of the large vihāra being intended for the saṃgha carries no great significance at all.
3. We have discovered an instructive detail, revealing information about the maturation of early Buddhist monasticism.

The first conclusion is unlikely, as it is preserved in this form in the Tibetan text.[41] The second conclusion is unacceptable for several reasons. First, we find

numerous examples of *vihāras* (i.e., *ārāmas*) being donated to the saṃgha or individuals by various kings and lay disciples, but it is only the developed Skandhaka text, illustrated by Frauwallner to be relatively later than the date which we have set for the root Prātimokṣa, that we find any mention of a superintendent of buildings (*navakarmika*), which the monk in the rule in question seems to be.[42] Second, the word *vihāra* is generally agreed to have represented, in earliest times, the dwelling of a single monk, later being adopted as the title for monastic dwellings.[43] Third, the interest in monastic life is dismissed by Frauwallner as having "gained greater importance only in the course of time."[44] Thus we are tentatively led to accept the third conclusion, and can make several statements in the way of summary. In the early tradition *kuṭi* (hut) and *vihāra* are almost synonymous, while later there exists a clear line of differentiation between the two terms. If we can accept that the period in which monastic officers come to be designated is somewhat later than that of the formation of the root Prātimokṣa text, and I do, the presence of such a monk in the Mūlasarvāstivādin text indicates that their Prātimokṣa became finalized at a later date than those in which no monastic officers are hinted at. Finally, if we consider the above in the light of the enormous emphasis of the Mūlasarvāstivādins on *sīmā* (boundaries),[45] we must ascribe the prevalence of this school to a time period when there was great interest in the Buddhist monastic institution and its preservation, noted by Frauwallner (above) to be late.

Coming now to the second topic, that of the *upāsikā*, we must examine the *aniyata dharmas*. Both of these rules are similar so I shall reproduce the critical passage only from the first. The translation for the Mahāsāṃghika and Theravādin texts is as follows:

> Whatever monk, should sit down with a woman, one with the other, in secret, on a concealed, convenient seat, and a trustworthy upūsikā, having seen that one, should accuse him according to one or another of three dharmas: (either) with a pārājika, saṃghāvaśeṣa, or pāyantika dharma . . .

For the Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin versions, the gerund *dṛṣtvā*, "having seen," has been deleted, otherwise reading identically. The remainder of the rule in each version goes on to explain that the monk should be dealt with according to the dictate of the *upāsikā* in question. The intention of the rule is clear enough: the seat is convenient and suitable for sexual intercourse, and should the monk indulge, he is charged with a *pārājika dharma*; if he remains chaste, he is charged with one of the lesser offenses. However, the substance of this rule is not the issue on which we should focus our attention. The Buddha's publically announced distrust of women is widely acknowledged, and that such a rule exists at all is truly remarkable. The key point is that in the Mahāsāṃghika and Theravādin versions, the *upāsikā*, no matter how trustworthy, must bring her charge only on the basis of personal, eyewitness testimony. Anything short of

that seems not to be admitted as sufficient grounds for such an accusation. The Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin versions have nothing to say with regard to the offense being witnessed. The upāsikā's charge against the *bhikṣu* is accepted simply on the basis of her word, trustworthy though it may be, laying open the very real possibility of the admissibility of hearsay evidence, a notion strongly deprecated by Buddha himself.[46] Can the omission of *dṛṣṭvā* in the versions noted be an oversight or error on the part of the respective compilers? Perhaps, but I think not. Rather, it seems to indicate, and further research will be necessary to validate this thesis, a gradual upgrading of the status of *upāsikās*, a process which puts considerable time between the finalization of the two sets of Prātimokṣa Sūtras: the Mahāsāṃghika and Theravādin being early and the Mūlasarvāstivādin and Sarvāstivādin being late. We should bear in mind that we have examined only two topics and certainly, similar results might be achieved in other areas.

The final question, of course, must be: what further Prātimokṣa research is necessary if we are to have any hope of arriving at a conclusive resolution to the "Prātimokṣa Puzzle?" First, all the texts preserved in the various canonical languages must be made available, in translation, to scholars. Many researchers, regardless of their linguistic skills, are simply discouraged by the huge bulk of Prātimokṣa literature. Hopefully, translations which are well done and scrupulously footnoted may break down some of this resistance. Corollary to this is the publication of translations of Prātimokṣa commentaries. It is difficult to understand why the extensive commentatorial traditions of the Theravādins and Mūlasarvāstivādins have been so long neglected when within these same traditions, commentaries on doctrinal matters have been so heavily relied upon. Next we must entertain more comparative study, not avoiding the critical topics and divergent points as some scholars have done, but exposing them wherever and whenever possible. We must give up the old habit of reliance on numerical tricks for resolving textual differences and dating texts, and in the place of this superficial approach, establish valid techniques, such as tracing the development of concepts in the light of cross-cultural reference points, or studying the usage of various significant terms in several contexts, perhaps modelling our work after the technique employed by Maryla Falk in *Nāma-Rūpa and Dharma-Rūpa* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1943). The interest in early Buddhist monasticism must be rekindled in the hope that it may reveal data hitherto unknown. Finally, when we are fortunate enough to uncover new texts, as Rāhula Sāṅkṛtyāyana did in the 1930s, they must not be stored away in a library for thirty years to gather dust while scholars make incorrect statements about them, such as Sukumar Dutt's incorrect labelling of the Vinaya texts unearthed by Sāṅkṛtyāyana as Mūlasarvāstivādin rather than Mahāsāṃghika.[47] Only when we begin to advance in the direction outlined can there be any decisive breakthrough.

Notes

1 On this point, see, for example: Sukumar Dutt, *The Buddha and Five After Centuries*, London: Luzac & Company, Limited, 1957, p. 76. In using the term "paracanonical," I am following Louis Renou and Jean Filliozat, *L'Inde Classique*, Tome II; Paris: Imprimerie' Nationale, 1953, p. 351 [par. 1980].
2 Thomas W. Rhys Davids and Hermann Oldenberg [trs.] *Vinaya Texts*, 3 vols., reprint; Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965, I, pp. xxvii–xxviii.
3 E. J. Thomas, *The History of Buddhist Thought*, 2nd ed., reprint; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1963, p. 15, n. 1.
4 Moriz Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, 2 vols.; Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1927, 1933, II, p. 22, n. 2.
5 W. Pachow, *A Comparative Study of the Prātimokṣa*. In *Sino-Indian Studies*, Volume IV, 1–4 and V, 1 [1951–1955], IV, 1, p. 20.
6 Hermann Oldenberg [ed.], *The Vinaya Piṭakaṃ*, 5 vols., reprint; London: Luzac & Company, Ltd. (for *P.T.S.*), 1964, I, p. 103 [Mahāvagga II.3.4.].
7 Sukumar Dutt, *Early Buddhist Monachism*, revised; Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1960, pp. 72–73.
8 *Ibid.*, p. 70.
9 The translation is mine, as are all others in this paper.
10 The text quoted represents the Prātimokṣa of Vipaśyin Buddha.
11 Refer to W. Pachow and Ramakanta Mishra [eds.], "The Prātimokṣa Sūtra of the Mahāsāṃghikas," *Journal of the Gaṅgānāth Jhā Research Institute*, X, 1–4 [November–February–May–August, 1952–1953], Appendix, pp. 42–45.
12 Dutt, *Early Buddhist Monachism*, p. 73. The brackets are mine.
13 *Ibid.*, pp. 73–74.
14 Pachow, *A Comparative Study of the Prātimokṣa*, IV, 2, p. 81.
15 V. Trenckner [ed.], *The Majjhima Nikāya*, Vol. I, reprint; London: Luzac & Company, Ltd., (for *P.T.S.*), 1964, p. 33 [Ākaṅkheyya Sutta].
16 See: Erich Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature*, Rome: Instituto per II Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1956, p. 79. Rhys Davids and Oldenberg in *Vinaya Texts*, I, pp. xv–xvl, regard the formulary as part of the Old Commentary [Padabhājaniya], but there is no basis for this. Also see: Oldenberg, *The Vinaya Piṭakaṃ*, I, p. xix, which states, "The Mahāvagga gives precepts concerning the recital of the Pātimokkha, which put it beyond a doubt that the name Pātimokkha refers here to that text which we also possess under the same name."
17 Dutt, *Early Buddhist Monachism*, p. 75. The parentheses are mine.
18 *Ibid.*, p. 77.
19 Pachow, *A Comparative Study of the Prātimokṣa*, IV, 1, p. 23.
20 See, for example: V. Trenckner [ed.], *The Milindupañho*, reprint; London: Luzac & Company, Ltd. (for *P.T.S.*), 1962, pp. 143, 243, and 272, and also, Richard Morris [ed.], *The Aṅguttara Nikāya*, Vol. I, 2nd ed., revised; London: Luzac & Company, Ltd. (for *P.T.S.*), 1961, pp. 230, 231, 232, and 234.
21 B. C. Law, *A History of Pāli Literature*, 2 vols.; London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trūbner & Co., Ltd., 1933, I, p. 21.
22 Pachow, *A Comparative Study of the Prātimokṣa*, IV, 1, pp. 25–26.
23 Dutt, *Early Buddhist Monachism*, pp. 78–79.
24 Oldenberg, *The Vinaya Piṭakaṇi*, I, pp. xvi–xvii.
25 Gokuldas De, *Democracy in Early Buddhist Saṃgha*, Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1955, p. 61. The brackets are mine.
26 Dutt, *Early Buddhist Monachism*, p. 84.
27 This is pointed out by several scholars. For example, see: De, *Democracy in Early Buddhist Saṃgha*, p. 63.

28 For an example of this *nidāna*, refer to pages 3–5 of the Sanskrit Mahāsāṃghika text, cited in note 11 above.
29 For a discussion of *pariśuddhi*, see: I. B. Horner [tr.], *The Book of the Discipline*, 6 vols.; London: Luzac & Company, Ltd. (for P.T.S.), 1938–1966, IV, pp. vi and xv.
30 Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya*, pp. 111–112.
31 Stanislaw Schayer, "Precanonical Buddhism," *Archiv Orientaini*, VII [1935], p. 124.
32 De, *Democracy in Early Buddhist Saṃgha*, p. 72.
33 Dutt, *Early Buddhist Monachism*, p. 75. The brackets are mine.
34 For the Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣa Sūtra, see: Ernst Waldschmidt [ed. and tr.], *Bruchstücke des Bhikṣuni-Prātimokṣa der Sarvāstivādin*, Leipzig, 1926.
35 Refer to J. F. Dickson [ed. and tr.], "The Pātimokkha, being the Buddhist Office of the Confession of Priests. The Pali Text, with a Translation and Notes," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, New Series VIII [1876], pp. 84 and 111 [rule 23], and 89 and 117 [rule 82].
36 Pachow, *A Comparative Study of the Prātimokṣa*, IV, 2, pp. 61–62.
37 *Ibid.*, IV, 2, p. 62.
38 *Ibid.*, IV, 2, pp. 59–60.
39 *Ibid.*, IV, 2, pp. 60–61, and 79.
40 In Finot's edition of the Sanskrit Sarvāstivādin text [*Journal Asialique*, 1913, pp. 465–557], many of the *śaikṣa dharmas* are missing altogether and several more have been reconstructed.
41 See: Satis Chandra Vidyabhusana [ed. and tr.], "So-sor-thar-pa; or, A Code of Buddhist Monastic Laws: Being the Tibetan Version of the Prātimokṣa of the Mūlasarvāstivāda School," *Journal of the Asialic Society of Bengal*, New Series IX, 3–4 [1915], p. 12.
42 Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya*, p. 123.
43 See, for example: Dutt, *The Buddha and Five After Centuries*, pp. 71–72.
44 Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya*, p. 121.
45 See: Nalinaksha Dutt [ed.], assisted by Vidyavaridhi Shiv Nath Sharma, *The Gilgit Manuscripts*, Vol. III, Parts 1–4; Calcutta: Calcutta Oriental Press Ltd., 1940–1950, III, 4, pp. 84–94.
46 Although uttered in a different context, see: Morris, *The Aṅguttara Nikāya*, I, p. 189 [Kālāma Sutta].
47 Sukumar Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries in India*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1962, pp. 78–79.

17

NUNS, LAYWOMEN, DONORS, GODDESSES

Female roles in early Indian Buddhism*

Peter Skilling

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I. Gender pairing

In this paper, I will examine several aspects of the role of the female in "early Buddhism", defined here as from the time of the Buddha up to the early centuries of the Christian Era[1]. Since a study of female roles should not neglect the broader context of gender relations within the Buddhist community, I will begin by examining a structural feature of Buddhist social organization and literature (the one reflecting the other), which I describe as "gender pairing". For this we will start in the middle of the 3rd century BCE, with the reign of King Aśoka, whose edicts are both the earliest lithic records of India and the earliest extant information on Buddhism.

Aśoka's famous edict on *saṃghabheda*, which was set up at three important centres of Buddhist activity — Kauśāmbī, Sāñcī, and Sārnāth — refers to both monks and nuns (*bhikkhu, bhikkhunī*)[2]. The Sārnāth inscription was to be communicated to both the order of monks (*bhikkhusaṃgha*) and the order of nuns (*bhikkhuni-saṃgha*). In the "Calcutta-Bairāṭ" edict, the King conveys his wish that both monks and nuns, both laymen and laywomen, frequently listen to and reflect upon selected teachings of the Buddha — the famous *dhaṃmapaliyāya*[3].

For our purposes, the edicts tell us two things. Firstly, they show Aśoka's concern for the welfare of both *saṃghas*, and his regard for the order of nuns as an important social body, on a par with the order of monks[4]. Secondly, the language of the inscriptions reflects the fact that the monastic ordination lineage, established by the Buddha himself, was dual in nature: men became *bhikkhu*-s, and women became *bhikkunī*-s. Lay disciples were also classed by gender: laymen (*upāsaka*) and lay-women (*upāsikā*).

From Aśoka's edicts we may thus deduce that the leading participants in the early Buddhist movement were two gendered pairs: monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen[5]. A similar picture may be drawn from the scriptures, where the

two pairs make up the "four assemblies"[6]. At the beginning of his career, the Buddha expressed his intention that the four groups become independent of him in their ability to absorb, teach, and explain his teachings. This is recounted in the Theravādin *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta*, where the Buddha relates how, not long after his enlightenment; Māra came and requested him to enter final *nibbāna* immediately (that is, fearing loss of influence, Māra did not want the Blessed One to teach the *dhamma*). The Buddha replied: "I will not enter *parinibbāna*, Evil One, until my monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen have become auditors who are intelligent, trained, confident, learned, bearers of *dhamma* who practise in accordance with *dhamma*, who practise correctly, who follow *dhamma*; who, taking up what they have learned from their teacher, will announce, teach, proclaim, establish, reveal, explain, and clarify it; who when a dispute arises, will admonish correctly, following the *dhamma*, and, having admonished, will teach the marvellous *dhamma*. I will not enter *parinibbāna*, Evil One, until under me the holy life is successful, flourishing, widespread, popular, and far-famed: until it is well-proclaimed among humans"[7]. The phrasing of (Mūla)-Sarvāstivādin parallels — the *Divyāvadāna* and the Central Asian *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* — differs, but also stresses the wisdom and capability of all four groups equally[8].

In this passage, the Buddha defines the conditions for the success of his teaching, of the "holy life" (*brahmacaryā*). When the Buddha is eighty years old Māra reminds him of the statement, and asserts that the conditions have now been fulfilled. The Buddha offers no direct comment, but tells Māra that he will enter *nibbāna* in three months' time, thereby implicitly accepting the truth of Māra's verdict. Similarly, in the *Pāsādika-sutta*, in the latter years of his career, the Buddha tells Cunda that he now has "senior monk disciples who are intelligent, trained, confident, who have attained release from bondage; who are able to proclaim properly the holy *dhamma*; who, when a dispute arises, are able to admonish correctly, following the *dhamma*, and, having admonished, to teach the marvellous *dhamma*". He goes on to list the other members of his flock: middle-ranking monks, and newly-ordained monks; senior, middle-ranking, and newly-ordained nuns; laymen and laywomen householders, both celibate and non-celibate, and concludes with the assertion that: "Now, Cunda, under me the holy life is successful, flourishing, widespread, popular, and far-famed, well-proclaimed among humans"[9].

The four assemblies are also put on an equal footing in the *Sobhanasutta*. Here the Buddha states: "These four [individuals], O monks, intelligent, trained, confident, learned, bearers of *dhamma* who practise in accordance with *dhamma* adorn the order (*saṃgha*): a monk who is intelligent . . .; a nun . . .; a layman . . .; a laywoman . . ."[10]. By way of contrast, according to the Theravādin *Saṅgīti-sutta* and an *Ekottarāgama* cited in the *Sūtrasamuccaya*, one of the characteristics of barbarous frontier regions is that they are not visited by monks or nuns, laymen or lay-women[11]. That is, the presence of the four assemblies in an area was the defining mark of "civilization", since only then was there a chance to hear and practise the *dhamma*.

Other members of the movement were also classed in gendered pairs. Disciples of the Buddha in general were known as male-auditors (*sāvaka*) and female-auditors (*sāvikā*); lower ordination consisted of *sāmaṇera*-s and *sāmanerī*-s. For further examples, see Table 1.

Since the monastic lineages were dual in nature, the related monastic literature was made up of paired texts: *Vinaya, Pāṭimokkha, Kammavācā* for both monks (*bhikkhu*) and nuns (*bhikkhunī*). These texts pertain to the regulation of the monastic life. Other paired texts are found in the *Khuddhaka-nikāya* of the *Sutta-piṭaka*, as may be seen in Table 2. The "feminine" pairs consist of three collections of verse that include, I believe, some of the oldest examples of (ascribed) female composition in Indian literature[12]. The *Therī-gāthā* contains verses spoken by over seventy senior or elder nuns (*therīs*), expressing their

Table 1 Gender pairing in terminology[1]

a. General	
sāvaka: śrāvaka	sāvikā: śrāvikā
kulaputta: kulaputra	(kuladhītā)[2]: kuladuhitṛ
b. Renunciants	
samaṇa: śramaṇa	samaṇī: śramaṇī, śramaṇṇā, śramaṇikā
bhikkhu: bhikṣu	bhikkhurnī: bhikṣuṇī
sāmaṇera: śrāmaṇera	sāmaṇerī: śrāmaṇerī, śrāmaṇerikā
thera: sthavira	therī: sthavirī, stherī, thavirī
upajjhāya: upādhyāya	upajjhāyā, upajjhāyinī: upādhyāyinī, upādhyāyikā
—: karmakāraka	—: karmakārikā[3]
ācariya: ācārya	ācariṇī[4]: ācāryāyiṇī, ācāryikā
saddhivihārī: sārdhāṃvihārī	saddhivihārinī[5]: sārdhaṃvihāriṇī
antevāsi: antevāsi	antevāsī[6]: antevāsinī
—	sahajīvinī[7]:—
—	sikkhamānā: śikṣamāṇā
—	—: upasthāyikā[8]
—	pavattinī[9]:—
c. Lay persons	
upāsaka: upāsaka	upāsikā: upāsikā
gahapati: gṛhapati	gahapatānī: gṛhapatinī
gihī: gṛhī	gihinī: gṛhiṇī

1 This is a preliminary list, and does not include all possible terms or forms. For each term I give first Pāli then (Buddhist) Sanskrit (largely Lokottaravādin), as available. References are given for only a few rarer terms. For further equivalents in Prukrit and Sanskrit from inscriptions and literature, see Skilling 1993–4, pp. 29–30. Nolot 1991, pp. 30, n. 80, and pp. 533–534, discusses several of the terms (not all of which are uniquely Buddhist).
2 See remarks in text, n. 67.
3 See Nolot 1996, p. 89.
4 For Pāli *ācariṇī* see *Vinaya* (*Bhikkhunī-vibhaṅga*) IV 227.4, 317.26 and 29, 320.3, 322.11.
5 For Pāli *saddhivihārinī* see *Vinaya* (*Bhikkhunī-vibhaṅga*) IV 291.27, 325.11, 326.penult.
6 For Pāli *antevāsī* see *Vinaya* (*Bhikkhunī-vibhaṅga*) IV 291.31.
7 *Vinaya* (*Bhikkhunī-vibhaṅga*) IV, *pācittiya* XXXIV, LXVIII, LXX.
8 See Nolot 1991, p. 533.
9 See Nolot 1991, p. 534.

Table 2 Paired texts in the Theravādin tradition[1]

a. Texts related to monastic discipline (Vinaya)	
Male	Female
Bhikkhu Vibhaṅga	*Bhikkhunī Vibhaṅga*
Bhikkhu Pāṭimokkha	*Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha*
Bhikkhu Kammavācā	*Bhikkhunī Kammavācā*
b. Texts included in the "Miscellaneous Collection" (Khuddaka-nikāya) of the Sutta-piṭaka	
Male	Female
Verses of Elder Monks (Theragāthā)	*Verses of Elder Nuns (Therīgāthā)*
Exploits of Elder Monks (Therāpadāna)	*Exploits of Elder Nuns (Therī-apadāna)*
Purisa-vimāna	*Itthi-vimāna*

1 As different schools or lineages evolved, each codified and transmitted texts in its own recensions. In this table I list only the Theravādin versions.

enlightenment or relating their spiritual careers. A few of the nuns' verses are incorporated into the Lokottaravādin *Bhikṣuṇī Vinaya*[13]. That the Mūlasarvāstivādins transmitted a counterpart of the *Therī-gāthā* is seen from references in lists of titles corresponding roughly to the *Kṣudraka* or miscellaneous collection: the *Carma-vastu* and *Adhikaraṇa-vastu* of their *Vinaya* refer to a *Sthavirī-gāthā*[14], and the *Saṃyuktāgama* in Chinese translation mentions a *Bhikṣuṇī-gāthā*[15]. The collection has not been preserved either in the original Sanskrit or in translation[16].

In the *Therī-apadāna*, forty *therīs* relate in verse the deeds of their past existences and the joy of their present freedom[17]. The *Therī-gāthā* and *Therī-apadāna* give the verses of the *therī*-s only, with no narrative elements. The *Itthivimāna* has a different structure: in answer to verse questions put by others (for example, Mahāmoggallāna), goddesses explain in verse the meritorious deeds that have led to their rebirth in fabulously beautiful conditions[18]. It is noteworthy that the stories present, without comment or condemnation, female continuities across rebirths: in their past lives the goddesses were also female[19]. While the *Thera-gāthā* and *Thera-apadāna* are much longer than the *Therī-gāthā* and *Therī-apadāna*, the *Itthivimāna* is longer than the *Purisavimāna*. The closest non-Theravādin parallels to the *Vimānavatthu* that I know of are Parables 51 to 57 of the *Tsa-pao-tsang-ching*, all of which concern goddesses[20].

Gender pairing also occurs within the texts of the *Nikāya*-s/*Āgama*-s, particularly (by nature of its structure) the *Aṅguttara-nikāya/Ekottarāgama*. The most famous example is the *Etadagga-vagga* of the *Ekaka-nipāta*, in which the Buddha praises outstanding monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen according to their individual talents[21]. A parallel text is included in the Chinese translation of an *Ekottarāgama* of unknown school[22]. In the Theravādin version, the Blessed One lists thirteen outstanding nuns; in the *Ekottarāgama* he extols fifty-one nuns[23]. The Sanskrit *Karmavibhaṅgopadeśa* (of unknown school) refers to a similar collection as the *Bhikṣuṇīnām-agratā-sūtra*[24]. References to nuns using the *etad-agra*

formula are scattered here and there in Mūlasarvāstivādin literature: in the *Avadānaśataka*, for example, Supriyā is praised as "foremost of those who have made merit" (*Kṛtapuṇyānāṃ*)[25]. Some other examples will be given below.

(It is worthy of note that the *Uppātasanti*, a Pāli protective verse text believed to have been composed in Northern Thailand [Lān Nā] during the Ayutthaya period, lists the thirteen *therīs* of the Pāli version along with their attainments, and invokes their protection — along with that of past Buddhas, the great male disciples, deities, and so on)[26].

From a verse of the *Apadāna* of Paṭācārā we learn that past Buddhas (in this case Padumuttara) also made *etad-agga* declarations[27]. Indeed, each Buddha of the past, present, and future has two "chief male-auditors" (*aggasāvaka*) and two "chief female-auditors" (*aggasāvikā*). The *Buddhavaṃsa* names the pairs of monks and nuns who held this position for each past Buddha; in the case of Gotama, the chief female-auditors were Khemā and Uppalavaṇṇā[28]. The *Anāgatavaṃsa* gives the same information for the future Buddha Metteyya[29].

In another paired text — found in the *Āyācana-vagga* of the *Aṅguttaranikāya*, a Sanskrit *Ekottarāgama* from Gilgit, and the Chinese *Ekottarāgama* — the Buddha names model pairs of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen, whom their peers should emulate[30]. In the Pāli and Chinese versions, Khemā and Uppalavaṇṇā are the model nuns, while Khujjuttarā and Veḷukaṇṭakī Nandamātā are the model laywomen[31]. The Gilgit version has Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī and Utpalavarṇā in the first instance, and Viśākhā Mṛgāramātā of Śrāvastī and Kubjottarā of Kauśāmbhī in the second.

Laymen and laywomen are not neglected. The Buddha praises the qualities of ten laywomen in the Theravādin *Etadagga-vagga*, and thirty-one in the Chinese *Ekottarāgama*[32]. The Sanskrit *Karmavibhaṅgopadeśa* refers to a similar collection as the *Upāsikānām-agratā-sūtra*[33]. The *Buddhavaṃsa* names the two chief female lay-supporters (*agg' upaṭṭhik' upāsikā*) for each past Buddha, as does the *Anāgatavaṃsa* for the future Buddha Metteyya[34].

There is also a *Bhikkhunī-saṃyutta* in the *Sagātha-vagga*. Here there is no matching **Bhikkhu-saṃyutta* (but several *saṃyutta*-s of the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* are devoted to individual monks). A Sanskrit counterpart of the *Bhikkhunī-saṃyutta* is known from Central Asia, and a similar section is found in the Chinese *Saṃyuktāgama*; both belong to the (Mūla) Sarvāstivādin school[35]. Verses from this *saṃyukta* are cited in Sanskrit works such as the *Abhidharmakośa*. The Dharmaguptakas and Mahīśāsakas also included a *Bhikṣuṇī-saṃyukta* in their *Saṃyuktāgama*-s[36].

These examples show an even-handed treatment of gendered pairs in Aśoka's edicts and in texts of several schools: monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, are recognized and valued social roles or bodies[37]. This gendered pairing — which goes beyond a simple acknowledgement of the natural fact of sexual polarity (classed in Buddhist texts as the male and female faculties, *purisa* and *itthi indriya*-s) — pervades early Buddhist literature. I do not think that gender pairing was accorded the same degree of significance in early brahmanical or

Jaina literary traditions[38]. Although these traditions also had paired terms (as i only natural) — especially the Jainas, whose terminology was similar to that c the Buddhists — they did not transmit paired texts, or anthologies devote exclusively to women[39].

II. Nuns and the transmission of the scriptures

What role did nuns — or women — play in the transmission of scriptures? Fc practical purposes, the *Bhikkunī Pāṭimokkha* and *Bhikkunī Kammavācā* mu: have been transmitted by the nuns themselves, since these texts had to b memorized and recited. What about other texts? Traditional accounts of th Buddhist councils (*saṃgīti*) (available for a number of schools) record that th oral traditions and (later) written scriptures were rehearsed, redacted, an handed down by monks: or at least they do not mention nuns.

That nuns did participate in the transmission and explication of the sacre texts is, however, proven by both literary and epigraphic records. Several nur are known to have been outstanding preachers[40]. An important discourse, th *Cūḷavedalla-sutta*, is spoken by the nun Dhammadinnā to her former husban Visākha. The Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin counterparts, included in th *Madhyamāgama*, were known as the *Bhikṣuṇīdharmadinnā-sūtra*[41]. It was well-known and authoritative text, cited in the *Abhidharmakośa* and oth works. In the *Khemātherī-sutta* of the *Avyākata-saṃyutta*, Khemā Therī delive a profound discourse to King Pasenadi[42]. The nun Thullanandā — whos behaviour was less than ideal — is described as "learned, eloquent, confiden outstanding in the ability to preach sermons"[43]. Many people came to hear h preach, including, on at least two occasions, King Pasenadi of Kosala[44]. Th same epithets are applied to Bhaddā Kāpilānī[45].

According to *pācattika* 93 of the Mahāsāmghika and Lokottaravādin *Bhikṣu Vinayas*, the ten qualifications of a nun who can induct other women into t order include being learned (*bahuśruta*) in *abhidharma* and *abhivinaya*[4 According to *pācattika* 104, a nun who acts as preceptor (*upasthāyikā upādhyāyinī*) must train her charge (*upasthāpitān ti sārdhaṃ vihāriṇī*) for tw years in *abhidharma* and *abhivinaya*[47]. In the *Sobhanasutta* cited above, a nu who is, among other things, "learned, a bearer of *dhamma*" (*bhikkhunī* . *bahussutā dhammadharā*) is said to adorn the order. The *Cūḍāpakṣāvadāna* the *Divyāvadāna* mentions nuns who are "versed in Tripiṭaka, preachers dharma, coherent and fluent speakers" (*bhikṣuṇyas tripiṭā dhārmakathikā yukt muktapratibhāṇā*)[48].

The accomplishments of nuns related to the transmission or preaching *dhamma* are singled out in statements phrased in the *etad-agga* formula. It important to observe that these exemplary nuns are described as "foremo among my female auditors, among the nuns" (*etad aggaṃ . . . mama sāvikāna bhikkhunīnaṃ*) in a certain ability: that is, other nuns had the same accomplis ments, but to a lesser degree. In the *Etadagga-vagga*, the above-mention

formula are scattered here and there in Mūlasarvāstivādin literature: in the *Avadānaśataka*, for example, Supriyā is praised as "foremost of those who have made merit" (*Kṛtapuṇyānāṃ*)[25]. Some other examples will be given below.

(It is worthy of note that the *Uppātasanti*, a Pāli protective verse text believed to have been composed in Northern Thailand [Lān Nā] during the Ayutthaya period, lists the thirteen *therīs* of the Pāli version along with their attainments, and invokes their protection — along with that of past Buddhas, the great male disciples, deities, and so on)[26].

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II. Nuns and the transmission of the scriptures

What role did nuns — or women — play in the transmission of scriptures? For practical purposes, the *Bhikkunī Pāṭimokkha* and *Bhikkunī Kammavācā* must have been transmitted by the nuns themselves, since these texts had to be memorized and recited. What about other texts? Traditional accounts of the Buddhist councils (*saṃgīti*) (available for a number of schools) record that the oral traditions and (later) written scriptures were rehearsed, redacted, and handed down by monks: or at least they do not mention nuns.

That nuns did participate in the transmission and explication of the sacred texts is, however, proven by both literary and epigraphic records. Several nuns are known to have been outstanding preachers[40]. An important discourse, the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta*, is spoken by the nun Dhammadinnā to her former husband Visākha. The Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin counterparts, included in the *Madhyamāgama*, were known as the *Bhikṣuṇīdharmadinnā-sūtra*[41]. It was a well-known and authoritative text, cited in the *Abhidharmakośa* and other works. In the *Khemātherī-sutta* of the *Avyākata-saṃyutta*, Khemā Therī delivers a profound discourse to King Pasenadi[42]. The nun Thullanandā — whose behaviour was less than ideal — is described as "learned, eloquent, confident, outstanding in the ability to preach sermons"[43]. Many people came to hear her preach, including, on at least two occasions, King Pasenadi of Kosala[44]. The same epithets are applied to Bhaddā Kāpilānī[45].

According to *pācattika* 93 of the Mahāsāmghika and Lokottaravādin *Bhikṣuṇī Vinayas*, the ten qualifications of a nun who can induct other women into the order include being learned (*bahuśruta*) in *abhidharma* and *abhivinaya*[46]. According to *pācattika* 104, a nun who acts as preceptor (*upasthāyikā ti upādhyāyinī*) must train her charge (*upasthāpitān ti sārdhaṃ vihāriṇī*) for two years in *abhidharma* and *abhivinaya*[47]. In the *Sobhanasutta* cited above, a nun who is, among other things, "learned, a bearer of *dhamma*" (*bhikkhunī . . . bahussutā dhammadharā*) is said to adorn the order. The *Cūḍāpakṣāvadāna* of the *Divyāvadāna* mentions nuns who are "versed in Tripiṭaka, preachers of *dharma*, coherent and fluent speakers" (*bhikṣuṇyas tripiṭā dhārmakathikā yukta-muktapratibhāṇā*)[48].

The accomplishments of nuns related to the transmission or preaching of *dhamma* are singled out in statements phrased in the *etad-agga* formula. It is important to observe that these exemplary nuns are described as "foremost among my female auditors, among the nuns" (*etad aggaṃ . . . mama sāvikānaṃ bhikkhunīnaṃ*) in a certain ability: that is, other nuns had the same accomplishments, but to a lesser degree. In the *Etadagga-vagga*, the above-mentioned

Dhammadinnā is extolled as "foremost among preachers of *dhamma*"[49]. Paṭācārā is singled out as "foremost among bearers of *vinaya*"[50]. According to the Mūlasarvāstivādin *Vinaya* and the *Avadānaśataka*, Kacaṃgalā is "foremost among those who explain the *sūtras*"[51]. According to the *Avadānaśataka*, Somā is "foremost among those who are learned and who preserve the oral tradition" (*bahuśrutānāṃ śrutadharīṇāṃ*), and Kṣemā is "foremost among those who are very wise and very eloquent" (*mahāprājñānāṃ mahāpratibhānāṃ*)[52]. In the *Etadagga-vagga*, the latter is described as "foremost among those who are very wise"[53].

An early Pāli chronicle, the *Dīpavaṃsa*, gives a long list of nuns, starting with Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and other nuns in India, who are described as "learned in *vinaya*" (*vinayaññū*) and "adept in the path" (*maggakovidā*)[54]. It then gives long lists of nuns: Therī Saṃghamittā and nuns who came with her from Jambudīpa to Sri Lanka, followed by other nuns both from India and Ceylon. A refrain states that the nuns "recited the *Vinaya-piṭaka* in Anurādhapura, recited the *Five Nikāyas* [of the *Sutta-piṭaka*], and the *Seven Treatises* [of the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*]"[55]. The account goes up to at least the time of Abhaya, son of Kuṭivaṇṇa, that is to the first half of the first century of the Christian Era[56], and concludes with the statement: "At present there are others — senior, middle, or newly-ordained — . . . bearers of *vinaya*, guardians of the transmission of the teaching: learned and virtuous, they illuminate this earth"[57]. The nuns were honoured by Kings Abhaya and Devānaṃpiya Tissa. King Lajjitissa listened to the well-spoken words (*subhāsita*) of the nuns and offered them whatever they desired[58].

Epigraphic evidence for the accomplishments of nuns in the field of learning is scant. At Sāñcī Avisinā from Maḍalāchikaṭa is described as "versed in the *sūtras*" (*sutātikinī*)[59]. No title is supplied to indicate her status, so we do not know whether she was a nun or a laywoman. A *bhikṣuṇī* named Buddhamitrā, who set up images of the Buddha, is described as "versed in the Tripiṭaka" (*trepiṭikā*)[60]. Buddhamitrā is associated with her teacher the *bhikṣu* Bala, also "versed in the Tripiṭaka". It is likely that both Buddhamitrā and Bala belonged to the Sarvāstivādin school.

Although early literary and epigraphic evidence thus shows that nuns contributed to the transmission of the texts — as is only to be expected — their role seems to have eventually been forgotten or ignored. Furthermore, no commentaries or independent treatises composed by nuns are known to have survived. It may be that they were never written down, or, if they were, they were not preserved in later ages, when the influence and status of the order of nuns waned. This may have been a decision made by the monks, who controlled the redaction of the scriptures.

If the scriptures were transmitted by males, by monks, there is one intriguing exception: the *Itivuttaka*. According to the commentary (attributed to Dhammapāla), the *Itivuttaka* was transmitted by the laywoman (*upāsikā*) Khujjuttarā, first of all to the ladies of the royal harem of King Udena at Kosambī,

who learnt it by heart. Later the monks learned the collection, which was recited by Ānanda at the First Council. This is a unique case of an entire collection being transmitted by a woman[61]. Khujjuttarā is praised for her "wide learning" (*bahussutatā*) in both the Pāli *Etadagga-vagga* and the Chinese *Ekottarāgama*[62]. As seen above, she is presented as a model laywoman in the Pāli, Gilgit, and Chinese *Aṅguttara-nikāya/Ekottarāgama*.

Nuns and laywomen in Mahāyāna sūtras[63]

In Mahāyāna sūtras, we meet another gendered pair: *kulaputro vā kuladuhitā vā*, "son of good family or daughter of good family". The pair occurs frequently, for example in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*[64] — where it often refers to the exemplary audience or potential practitioners of the "Perfection of Wisdom" — and in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*[65]. The pair also occurs in (Mūla) Sarvāstivādin literature, for example in the **Gautamī-sūtra* of the Chinese *Madhyamāgama*, in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, and in a *sūtra* cited in the *Abhidharmakośa*[66], but the extent of its use remains to be determined. It does not seem to be known in Pāli[67].

The openings (*nidāna*) of some Mahāyāna sūtras mention the presence of nuns in the audience. Some, such as the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, the *Susthitamatidevaputra-paripṛcchā*, the *Bhadrakalpika-sūtra*, and the *Ratnaguṇasaṃcaya-gāthā* simply record the presence of the four assemblies, or what I have described above as the two "gendered pairs" (monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen). The qualities, names, and size of the attendant *śrāvaka* assemblies are often mentioned, more often for monks but sometimes for nuns as well. The *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* and *Daśasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*-s state that 500 nuns, laymen, and laywomen were in the audience, "all of them stream-enterers"[68]. The *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* and *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka Sūtras* give the most detailed *nidāna* that I have found: "6000 nuns headed by Mahāprajāpatī, Bhikṣuṇī Yaśodharā Rāhulamātā and her following". Similarly, some sūtras mention (e.g. the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*) or list (e.g. the *Vajracchedikā*) the four assemblies in the closing formula. Many other Mahāyāna *sūtras* do not mention nuns at all. Although these *nidāna*-s are formulaic and ahistorical, they tell us something about the attitude of the compilers or editors of the texts towards nuns, and deserve further study[69].

One Mahāyāna sūtra which allots to females an outstanding role as teachers of the profound bodhisattva practices is the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. Out of the 52 *kalyāṇamitra*-s consulted by the pilgrim bodhisattva Sudhana, one is a *bhikṣuṇī* named Siṃhavijṛmbhitā[70]. Another *kalyāṇamitra*, the "night goddess" (*rātrī-devatā*) Sarvanagararakṣāsaṃbhavatejaḥśrī, relates her deeds in a former life as a nun named Dharmacakranirmāṇaprabhā, who had a retinue of 100,000 nuns (*bhikṣuṇī-śatasahasra-parivārā*)[71]. Out of the 52 *kalyāṇamitra*-s, four are described as laywomen (*upāsikā*)[72], and four others are female[73]. Others are goddesses: these will be discussed below.

The Mahāyāna was not a monolithic entity, and different texts present different views of women. An example is the discrepancy in attitude between the *Sukhāvatī* and *Akṣobhya Vyūha*-s[74]. In Amitābha's "pure land" there are no women — devotees are reborn as men, albeit within beautiful lotus-flowers — while both genders are present in the pure land of Akṣobhya. Neither *sūtra* mentions the presence of nuns or laywomen in the audience. In contrast, the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* includes a large group of nuns in the audience, as seen above, and predicts the future Buddhahood of Mahāprajāpatī and Yaśodharā[75]. After they have heard their predictions, the nuns offer to teach the *Lotus Sūtra*. These differences may reflect the influence of time and place, of social milieu, upon the composition of the *sūtras*, as well as the attitudes of the compilers towards women.

III. Nuns and laywomen as donors

During his lifetime, the Buddha and the community of monks and nuns attracted the support of female donors. One of the best-known, and most liberal, was Visākhā, "Migāra's mother", lauded by the Buddha as "foremost among female donors"[76]. She endowed a monastery at Sāvatthī, at which the Blessed One spent several rains-retreats. One of the classical *sutta* opening formulas (*nidāna*) begins with: "At one time the Blessed One was staying in Sāvatthī, in the Eastern Pleasance, at Migāra's mother's residence . . ."[77]. As noted above, on at least one occasion Visākhā invited both orders to a meal.

In the period beginning about a century after Aśoka, women participated in the sponsorship of the construction of the earliest surviving monuments of Buddhism, the great *caityas* at Bhārhut and Sāñcī. These edifices — the earliest large-scale stone monuments of India — were not erected and adorned by a single donor, but rather through collective sponsorship of men and women from various walks of life: royals, merchants, artisans, and their wives and relatives[78]. Donative inscriptions from these monuments and from other early sites record the names, and sometimes other details, of individuals who sponsored component parts of the structures, such as coping stones or pillars.

(A study of the family and social relationships recorded in the dedications is much needed, since it would tell us a great deal about individual and collective acts and dedications of merit[79]. Many donations were joint [family or corporate, rather than individual] acts; even when they were individual, the ensuing merit was dedicated to family members and teachers. The inscriptions show that family relationships retained their importance for renunciant monks and nuns. This is borne out by the monks' rules, the *Pātimokkha*, in which certain practices that are normally prohibited are allowed if the person involved is a relative. For example, *nissaggiya pācittiya* no. 4 states: "Should any *bhikkhu* get an old robe washed or dyed or washed by beating by a nun not related to him [*aññātikāya bhikkhuniyā*], this entails expiation with forfeiture". Similar exceptions involving nuns are found in *nissaggiya pācittiya*-s nos. 5 and 17; excep-

tions involving male or female householders [*aññātako gahapati vā gahapatānī vā*] are given in nos. 6 to 9 and 27. Biographies of the Buddha relate that he returned to Kapilavastu to convert his father [and other clan-relations], and ascended to the Trāyaśtriṃśa heaven to convert his mother. In the [Mūla]Sarvāstivādin tradition these two acts are among the necessary deeds performed by all Buddhas [*avaśyakaraṇiya*]. The first convert after the Group of Five monks was the householder Yaśa, who became an arhat and a monk. Immediately afterward, Yaśa's father, mother, and former wife all became stream-winners and lay-followers. Thus, from the beginning of the order, family relationships were important.)

Inscriptions from Sāñcī, Bhārhut, Kaṇheri, Kārle, Kuḍā, Nāsik, Pauni, Amarāvatī, and Mathurā show that nuns were major sponsors of the early monuments. Gregory Schopen has calculated that at Sāñcī there were 129 monk donors, and 125 nuns. He notes that "at Pauni there were three monk donors and five nuns; at Bhārhut 16 nuns and 25 monks; at Amarāvatī there were 12 monk donors and 12 nun donors"[80]. The inscriptions, which date from roughly the 2nd century BCE to the 3rd century CE, show not only that nuns played an active role in the erection of *caitya*-s and *vihāra*-s, but also that they had the social and economic status that enabled them to do so. Inscriptions from Nepal, belonging to the Licchavi period (5th to 9th centuries) record a number of donations made by nuns[81].

Other inscriptions commemorate donations made by women: some described as laywomen, others not. A thorough study of the role of lay-women as revealed in inscriptions remains to be undertaken, and I can give here only a few examples. At Sāñcī the term *upāsikā* occurs in fifteen dedications, *upāsaka* in four[82]. At Sannati a beam was sponsored by *upāsikā* Samā[83]. Queens, or other female members of the court, played a role. Mahādevī Gautamī Balaśrī, mother of Gautamīputra Siri-Sātakaṇi, donated a cave (*leṇa*) at Nasik (LL 1123). Also at Nasik, *upāsikā* Viṣṇudattā gave an endowment to the order (LL 1137), a cave (*layana*) was offered by *upāsikā* Mammā (LL 1145), and cells (*ovaraka*) were donated by Dakṣamitrā, wife of Ṛṣabhadatta (himself an active donor in the region) (LL 1132, 1134). At Nāgārjunakoṇḍa in Andhra Pradesh, female members of the royal elites were prominent donors[84]. In Sri Lanka, ten of the early (3rd century BCE to 1st CE) Brāhmī inscriptions edited by Paranavitana record the donation of caves to the *saṃgha* by nuns (*śamaṇi*) — as against nearly 300 by monks[85].

Nuns and laywomen also participated in the sponsorship of some of the earliest Buddha images, such as those produced at Mathurā[86]. At Mathurā a seated bodhisattva was set up by *upāsikā* Nāgapriyā, housewife of the goldsmith Dharmaka[87]. At Sāñcī, in the Kuṣāṇa period, an image of the *jambu-chāyā* episode was installed by Madhurikā, an image of Śākyamuni by Vidyāmatī, and an image of Bodhisattva Maitreya by a woman whose name has been lost[88]. At a later date, a fine bronze standing Buddha was donated by "Lady Buddhakaya" in Uttar Pradesh[89].

The pedestals of early stone images frequently bear scenes in relief representing worshippers or donors (in addition to geometric, floral, animal, or architectural motifs). I have not seen any studies of these reliefs in their own right. They are rich in detail and variety, and might be described as relief miniatures (especially in most reproductions, in which the scenes are so small that they are difficult to read). Examples from Mathurā show a variety of devotees: couples, or men and women, including children, paying respect to *dharma-cakras*, trees, or auspicious symbols (the *nandyāvarta*)[90]. In several cases what appear to be whole families are lined up in homage[91]. Pedestals from Gandhāra show couples, monks, or groups of men and women, standing or kneeling beside images of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, or "fire altars". Examples from Zwalf's handsome study of Gandhāran sculpture in the British Museum include:

2 monks and a couple	worshipping	a bodhisattva	(§ 1)
male figures	worshipping	a Buddha	(§ 6)
kneeling monks	worshipping	a Buddha	(§ 9)
men and women	worshipping	a bodhisattva	(§ 24)
pair of gods (?) or bodhisattvas (?) with a pair of monks	worshipping	a Buddha	(§ 26)
pair of monks	worshipping	3 Buddhas and 2 bodhisattvas	(§ 31)
pair of men and pair of women	worshipping	a bodhisattva	(§ 47)
men and women	worshipping	a "fire altar"	(§ 48)
man, woman, and girl	worshipping	a bodhisattva	(§ 52)[92].

The exact relations between the devotional figures and the donative inscriptions (when such exist), or between the miniature Buddhas or bodhisattvas on the base and the main image, are not clear[93]. A comprehensive study of the components of these reliefs would be instructive. It is interesting that, while Gandhāran reliefs show monks at worship, the Mathurā pedestals do not seem to do so, even though Mathurā inscriptions record the donations of monks and nuns[94]. One such image, a *kapardin* Buddha in the National Museum, New Delhi, was dedicated by a monk named Viraṇa; the base depicts four lay figures, of which at least two are female, paying homage to a bodhi-tree[95].

The examples given here make it abundantly clear that early Buddhist building, monumental art, and iconography were joint projects, sponsored by monastics and lay-followers, male and female. Nuns, laywomen, queens, wives, and mothers played a significant role, and without their participation the monuments would have been poorer places[96]. Records — inscriptions, or reliefs on *caitya* pillars or the bases of images — show that couples and whole families participated joyously in the cult, paying homage and making offerings at the shrines[97].

IV. Goddesses in text and stone

I have spoken above of the "paired texts" of the Pāli canon. One pair that is missing concerns deities: there is a *Devatā-saṃyutta*, but no **Devīsaṃyutta*; a *Devaputta-saṃyutta*, but no **Devadhītā-saṃyutta*; a *Yakkha-saṃyutta*, but no **Yakkhinī-saṃyutta*[98]. And generally speaking, goddesses figure rarely in the canonical Pāli texts.

I can think of two exceptions: the *Itthi-vimāna* of the Pāli *Vimānavatthu*, and the Sanskrit *Mahāsamāja-sūtra*[99]. The former (referred to earlier in Part I) gives verse descriptions of the delightful floating palaces or "mansions" (*vimāna*) enjoyed by goddesses (*devī*) as a result of meritorious deeds performed in their previous lives as humans. According to the commentary, and the occasional context, these goddesses belong to the Heaven of the Thirty-Three (*tāvatiṃsa*).

In the *Mahāsamāja-sūtra*, hosts of female deities are among the divine assembly that gathers to pay homage to the Blessed One and 500 arhats in the Kapilavastu Forest. The goddesses figure mainly among the "60 groups of deities" who illuminate the forest[100]. Included in their ranks are some whose names are known elsewhere, some whose nature is straightforward (such as goddesses of the four elements), and many who are otherwise unknown, whose sole claim to immortality rests in the *Mahāsamāja* verses. Also present in the assembly is "Hāritī, most exquisite in complexion and shape, surrounded by her children"[101]. Hāritī, with her children, is mentioned in the *Mahāmāyūrī* and other *Pañcarakṣā* texts, and in the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* and *Lalitavistara*[102].

Another early text, the *Āṭānāṭīya-sūtra*, is available in Pāli, Tibetan, Chinese, and in Sanskrit fragments from Central Asia[103]. The *Āṭānāṭīyasūtra* does not catalogue female divinities by name, but does list supernatural beings in gendered pairs: male *gandharva*-s and female *gandharva*-s; senior male *gandharva*-s and senior female *gandharva*-s; boy *gandharva*-s and girl *gandharva*-s; male *gandharva* attendants and female *gandharva* attendants; male *gandharva* messengers and female *gandharva* messengers: and so for *piśāca, kumbhāṇḍa, preta, nāga*, etc[104]. Other apotropaic (*rakṣā*) passages — such as those in the *Mahāmāmāyūrī*, *Laṅkāvatāra*, and *Mahābala*, also list powerful beings in gendered pairs[105].

Goddesses play a significant role in other early texts. The *Lalitavistara* lists in verse the goddesses who watched over the bodhisattva at birth, and female deities play prominent parts in other chapters of that text. The *Āśīrvādagāthā* — a verse blessing bestowed by the Buddha upon the merchants Trapuṣa and Bhallika, just after his enlightenment, transmitted both independently and in the *Lalitavistara*, the *Mahāvastu*, and other texts — invokes 32 *devakumārī*-s, in addition to 28 constellations, the four Great Kings, and a shrine for each quarter[106]. In a story related in the commentary to Mātṛceṭa's *Śatapañcāśatka*, 700 Brahmakāyika goddesses (*tshaṅs ris kyi lha mo*) pay homage in verse to the low-born Ārya Nīla[107]. A number of *rākṣasī*-s are named and summoned with *mantras* in the annex to the *Nagaropama-sūtra*[108]. Local goddesses are listed (alongside male deities) in the *Candragarbha-sūtra* of the *Mahāsannipāta*[109].

Elements common to the *mantras* of a wide range of texts — of Śrāvakayāna, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna — invoke the names of female deities. Usually found in association, they include *gauri, gandhāri, caṇḍāli*, and *mātaṅgi*, which feature in the *mantras* of the *Āṭānāṭīyasūtra*, the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*, the *Mahāmāyūrī*, the *Mahādaṇḍadhāraṇī*, the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, the *Mahābala-sūtra*, the *Ārya-avalokiteśvara-mātānāma-dhāraṇī*, and the Central Asian *Nagaropama-vyākaraṇa*[110]. For these phrases the editors drew on a common pool of *mantra* elements that seem to have been connected with the cult of female deities.

Examples have been given above of the outstanding position of women as teachers of the Mahāyāna in the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra*. Out of the 52 spiritual guides consulted by Sudhana, a total of twenty are women[111]. Out of these twenty, eleven are goddesses, who relate their attainments and give instruction[112]. Some recount their past lives, in which they were also female: that is, as in the *Itthi-vimāna* (see above), female continuities across rebirths are presented in a positive light. Goddesses take the stage elsewhere, such as in Chapter 44, in which a city goddess (*nagaradevatā*) named Ratnanetrā, surrounded by a host of sky goddesses (*gaganadevatāgaṇaparivṛtā*) gives Sudhana a sermon on guarding and adorning the "city of mind" (*cittanagara*)[113].

On the testimony of literature, we may conclude that reference to goddesses — some local, some mainstream — was widespread in early Buddhism. This is corroborated by archæological evidence. The earliest surviving Buddhist records — the great *caityas* of Bhārhut and Sāñcī, the Bodh Gayā railings, the stone monuments of the Deccan, and the *caitya* of Sanghol in the Punjab — swarm with female forms. Although they in part reflect the perennial Indian fascination with the feminine form, with the exuberance of existence, their function is not merely decorative[114]. They are there to celebrate, to pay homage, and to protect, along with their male counterparts. That many are divine is shown by the fact that they perch upon lotus blossoms, or on a variety of "vehicles" (*vāhana*), animal, mythological, and human. Divine mounts — including elephants, horses, camels, bulls, buffaloes, rams, sheep, serpents, birds, men, women, boys, and girls — are mentioned in the *Āṭānāṭīya-sūtra*[115], as well as in the *Vimāna-vatthu*[116].

Are these female figures anonymous, are they stereotypes, or are they individuals, with their own names? Could some of them be the goddesses enumerated in the *Mahāsamāja-sūtra*? They participate in a sacred complex that represents the protective circle, the *maṇḍala*, that is invoked in the *Mahāsamāja* and *Āṭānāṭīya Sūtras*, with the Four Kings standing guard at the cardinal points. Unfortunately, few of the images seem to have borne inscriptions, and in their present condition the monuments — with fragments and sculptures scattered in dozens of museums — are difficult to read and interpret. A narrative scene from Bhārhut includes the *apsara*-s (*acharā*) Subhadā, Padumāvati, Misakosi, and Alaṃbusā[117] — none of whom are mentioned in the *Mahāsamāja-sūtra*, although they are known in other texts such as the *Vimānavatthu* and the

Āśīrvāda-gāthā. Also represented at the great *caitya* were the *yakṣiṇī*-s Cadā and Sudasanā, and the goddesses (*devatā*) Culakokā, Mahakokā, and Sirimā[118]. At Sāñcī (and elsewhere) Śrī is ubiquitous[119], while Hārītī is popular in Gandhāran sculpture[120]. Other images, both free-standing and relief, represent unnamed *nāgī*-s and *yakṣiṇi*-s.

The role of goddesses in early Buddhism has yet to be adequately studied, whether from the point of view of archæology or of literature — perhaps because it fits uneasily into the "original Buddhism" constructed over the last century[121]. This Buddhism is ethical, philosophical, intellectual; it is austere and male, and it has no room for cults, no place for gods, let alone goddesses[122]. Beyond this, the reaction of early European scholarship to texts like the *Mahāsamāja* and *Āṭānāṭīya Sūtras* — not to speak of the *Pañcarakṣā* and other *mantra* texts — was generally unfavourable: the genre was regarded as peripheral, even beyond the pale of "true" Buddhism. No connection seems to have been drawn between the deities and the early monuments.

V. Conclusions

The testimony of inscriptions and other historical materials establishes that the order of nuns was a socially active and influential institution during the early centuries of Buddhism, into the Christian Era[123]. We have seen above that new female members of the order were instructed by their preceptors, from the start of their careers. As they themselves advanced in accomplishment and seniority, they would in turn train other nuns. Nuns were taught by nuns, by monks, by the Buddha; nuns taught other nuns, taught lay-followers and the public, taught kings. Nuns travelled; this is known from inscriptions, from the monks' and nuns' rules[124], and other records[125]. Thus the order of nuns flourished not only in India, but also abroad, for example in Sri Lanka, and in Khotan and Kucha in Central Asia.

With the passage of time, the order declined and died out. Since Indian society has never been monolithic — and the status of women would never have been consistent throughout the vast and diverse continent — the process must have been gradual and piecemeal, occurring at a different pace, to a different degree, in different regions. The order may have flourished in one place, and withered in another, or even have waned and then waxed anew: surviving records are insufficient to determine what happened. The factors that contributed to the decline, whether social (a parallel decline seems to have happened in "Indian" society) or internal (assertion or usurpation by the male order or male elites) remain to be defined.

In the early period, both nuns and laywomen were prominent sponsors of *caitya*-s, caves, and images. With the Gupta period the nature of Buddhist monument building changes: no longer do we meet with enduring edifices like the early *caitya*-s and caves, with their wealth of donative records carved in stone. Later monuments, constructed largely from brick and stucco, succumbed to the

ravages of impermanence and war, and survive (if at all) as ruined foundations. If the practice of cooperative sponsorship continued, there is little evidence for it: either the donations were recorded on perishable materials, or the nature of sponsorship and record-keeping had changed. Whatever the case, the body of available evidence shrinks from the Gupta period onwards, and the role of female donors becomes difficult to determine. We do know that women (lay-women more often than nuns) continued to dedicate images and manuscripts into the Pāla and Sena periods, but our records — scattered inscriptions and colophons — are fragmentary.

Gods and goddesses may enjoy fabulously long lives in their heavens, but on earth their cults rise and fall according to the whims of fickle humankind. Many of the early female deities, such as those listed in the *Mahāsamāja-sūtra*, disappeared without trace, with a few exceptions, such as Hārītī and Śrī. But in the Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna new goddesses and female bodhisattvas — such as Prajñāpāramitā, Tārā, or the five Pañcarakṣā deities — took their place, to play a vital role in day-to-day cult and practice[126].

The present paper has only scratched the surface of a vast and complex topic. There is scope for much more research, investigation, and analysis, which should amplify, improve, and correct these preliminary findings. Dundas has noted that "female religiosity in south Asian religions is a subject which up to comparatively recently has been inadequately treated . . . as further ethnographic data about the role of women, both lay and ascetic, starts to appear, there should be a partial readjustment away from the standard exclusively male-oriented perception of Jain society"[127]. The same holds for Buddhist society, history, religiosity. Texts — inscriptions and monuments, and the vast and largely unindexed Buddhist literature — wait to be read and interpreted. We should not expect the resultant data on the status of women to be consistent, especially in literature, since our texts belong to different periods and schools, and were composed, revised, and edited in different social milieux. I hope the present modest contribution to the social history of early India and early Buddhism, to some aspects of gender studies, is a step towards the sort of readjustment envisaged by Dundas for Jainism, and that it will inspire others to investigate the roles of women in Buddhism more thoroughly.

References

Unless otherwise noted, references to Pāli texts are to the roman-script editions of the Pali Text Society (PTS), England, by page and line. References to Tibetan texts are to D.T. Suzuki (ed.), *The Tibetan Tripiṭaka, Peking Edition*, Tokyo-Kyoto, 1955–61 (Q), by folio and line.

Abbreviations and titles

BCE	Before Christian Era
BSR	*Buddhist Studies Review* (London)
CE	Christian Era
Dīpavaṃsa	Hermann Oldenberg (ed., tr.), *The Dīpavaṃsa, An Ancient Buddhist Historical Record*, [London, 1879] New Delhi, 1982.
DPPN	G.P. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, 2 vols., [London, 1937–38] New Delhi, 1983
EB	*Encyclopædia of Buddhism* (Colombo)
JPTS	*Journal of the Pali Text Society* (Oxford)
LL	H. Lüders, "A List of Brāhmī Inscriptions from the Earliest Times to about A.D. 400 with the Exception of those of Aśoka", Appendix to *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. X, Calcutta, 1912 (reference by list number)
PTC	Pāli Tipiṭakam Concordance
PTSD	The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary
Q	see above
SHT	Ernst Waldschmidt et al., *Sanskrithandschriften aus den Turfan-Funden*, Wiesbaden, 1965–

Notes

* I am grateful to Ulrike Roesler (Marburg) and Justin Meiland (Oxford) for their careful reading, comments, and corrections.

1 The classic study of the subject remains Horner 1930. Her work makes thorough use of Pāli sources, but does not take into account inscriptions or the literature of other Buddhist schools. See also Paul 1979. For a variety of views on the date of the Buddha, see Bechert 1991, 1992, 1995: for this article, I assume that the *parinirvāṇa* took place between 400 and 350 BCE.

2 Bloch 1950, pp. 152–153.

3 Bloch, pp. 154–155; Schneider 1984, pp. 491–498. The edict is from a hill 52 miles north of Jaipur in Rajasthan; the "Calcutta" of the title signifies that the inscription was removed to Calcutta, then capital of British India.

4 Let us remember that according to Sri Lankan tradition Aśoka's daughter Saṃghamittā became a nun, and took a sapling of the bodhi-tree to the isle of Lankā, where she established the order of nuns.

5 A shorthand for the orders of monks and nuns was *ubhato-* or *ubhaya-saṃgha*, "both orders", "the two orders". In *pācattika* 84 of the Mahāsāṃghika and Lokottaravādin *Bhikṣuṇī Vinaya*-s, Viśākhā invites "the two orders" to a meal together: see Hirakawa 1982, p. 273; Roth 1970, Nolot 1991, §198. In the *Dakkhiṇā-vibhaṅga-sutta* (*Majjhimanikāya* III 255.28) the first two of seven classes of offerings made to the order (*saṃghagatā dakkhiṇā*) are to "both orders" (*ubhatosaṃghe dānaṃ deti*); these are followed by offerings to the order of monks, the order of nuns, an appointed number of monks and nuns, an appointed number of monks, and an appointed number of nuns.

6 See *PTSD* 437a, s.v. *parisā*, and Takasaki 1987, pp. 250–252. It is remarkable that the *Catuṣpariṣat-sūtra*, a Sarvāstivādin text which according to its title deals with

the [origins of] the "four assemblies", entirely omits the tale of the foundation of the order of nuns. The Jainas also have a "fourfold community" (*caturvidha-saṃgha*): Dundas 1992, p. 129.

7 *Dīgha-nikāya* II 112–113, *na tāvāhaṃ pāpima parinibbāyissāmi yāva me bhikkhū ... bhikkhuniyo ... upāsakā ... upāsikā na sāvikā bhavissanti viyattā vinītā visāradā bahussutā dhammadharā dhammānudhamma-paṭipannā sāmīcipaṭipannā anudhammacāriniyo, sakaṃ ācariyakaṃ uggahetvā ācikkhissanti desessanti paññāpessanti paṭṭhapessanti vivarissanti vibhajissanti uttānīkarissanti, uppannaṃ parappavādaṃ sahadhammena suniggahītaṃ niggahetvaā sappāṭihāriyaṃ dhammaṃ desessanti. na tāvāhaṃ pāpima parinibbāyissāmi yāva me idaṃ brahmacariyaṃ na iddhañ c'eva bhavissati phītañ ca vitthārikaṃ bāhujaññaṃ puthubhūtaṃ, yāva devamanussehi suppakāsitaṃ.*

8 *Māndhātāvadāna, Divyāvadāna* §XVII, Cowell & Neil 1987, p. 202.11, *na tāvat pāpīyan parinirvāsyāmi yāvan na me śrāvakāḥ paṇḍitā bhaviṣyanti vyaktā vinītā viśāradāḥ. alaṃ utpannotpannānāṃ parapravādināṃ saha dharmeṇa nigrahītāraḥ, alaṃ svasya vādasya paryavadāpayitāro bhikṣavo bhikṣuṇya upāsakā vaistārikaṃ ca me brahmacaryaṃ cariṣyanti bāhujanyaṃ pṛthubhūtaṃ yāvad devamanuṣyebhyaḥ samyaksaṃprakāśitaṃ. The Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* has a different string of words at the beginning, but is otherwise the same (except for some orthographical variation) (Waldschmidt 1986, §16.8) *paṇḍitā ... vyaktā medhāvinaḥ* (= Tib. *mkhas pa gsal ba śes rab tu Idan pa*), *alaṃ* ... Cf. also *Buddhacarita* XXIII 63–68.

9 *Dīgha-nikāya* III 125.17, *santi kho pana me cunda etarahi therā bhikkhū sāvakā viyattā vinītā visāradā patta-yogakkhemā, alaṃ samakkhātuṃ saddhammassa, alaṃ uppannaṃ parappavādaṃ sahadhammena suniggahītaṃ niggahetvā sappāṭhāriyaṃ dhammaṃ desetuṃ ... etarahi kho pana me cunda brahmacariyaṃ iddhañ ca phītañ ca vitthārikṃ bāhujaññaṃ puthu-bhūtaṃ, yāvad eva manussehi suppakāsitaṃ.*

10 *Aṅguttara-nikāya, Catukka-nipāta*: PTS II 8; Chaṭṭhasaṅgīti [1] 314; Syāmraṭṭha Vol. 21, pp. 9–10; Nālandā II 9–10, *cattāro 'me bhikkhave viyattā vinītā visāradā bahussutā dhammadharā dhammānudhamma-paṭipannā saṅghaṃ sobhenti.* Only Chaṭṭhasaṅgīti and Nālandā give the text in full. (Note that the omission of *dhammadharā* in the description of the *bhikkhunī* at PTS 8.13 must be a typographical error, since the epithets are applied equally to all four in the opening and closing statements.) The commentary (Chaṭṭasaṅgīti ed., *Aṅguttaraṭṭhakathā* II 252.4) has little to say: *viyattā ti paññā-veyyattiyena samannāgatā, vinītā ti vinayaṃ upetā suvinītā, visāradā ti vesārajjena somanassa-sahagatena ñāṇena samannāgatā, dhammadharā ti sutadhammānaṃ ādhārabhūtā.* For a parallel in the *Ekottarāgama*, see Przyluski 1923, pp. 207–208.

11 *Dīgha-nikāya* III 264.12, *paccantimesu janapadesu paccājato hoti milakkhusu aviññātāresu yattha n' atthi gati bhikkhūnaṃ bhikkhunīnaṃ upāsakānaṃ upāsikānaṃ* ...; Pāsādika 1989, p. 6.15, *mtha' 'khob kyi mi dań, rku 'phrog byed pa dań, kla klo dań, brnab sems can dań, gnod sems can gań du, dge slń dań, dge sloń ma dań, dge bsñen dań, dge bsñen ma mi 'oń ba'i nań du skyes pa yin no.*

12 "Ascribed" because monks were certainly involved in at least the later stages of editing, and because the *Itthivimāna* belongs rather to narrative literature. Female authorship was not uniquely Buddhist: for example, some hymns of the *Ṛg Veda* are attributed to women. Women act as astute philosophical interlocutors in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*: Olivelle 1996, §§3.6, 8 (Gārgī Vācaknavī) and 2.4, 4.5 (Maitreyī).

13 Nolot 1991, pp. 96–98.

14 Dutt 1984, Vol. III, pt. 4, p. 188.9; Gnoli 1978, p. 64.17.

15 Lamotte 1976, p. 178 (reference to Taishō 99, p. 362c10).

16 For the *Sthavira-gāthā* from Central Asia see Bechert 1974.
17 For the *Apadāna* see Cutler 1994.
18 For the *Vimānavatthu* see Horner 1974, Masefield 1989, and Falk 1990, pp. 139–142.
19 Cf. Harvey 1995, pp. 68–69, on gender continuity and change across rebirths.
20 See Willemen 1994, pp. 121–129.
21 *Aṅguttara-nikāya* I 23–26.
22 "Ekottarāgama (Traduit de la version chinoise par Thich Huyen-Vi)", in *BSR* 3.2 (1986), pp. 132–142; 4.1 (1987), pp. 47–58. This text, the *Tseng-i-a-han-ching*, is preserved only in Chinese translation; for its school affiliation, see Skilling 1994a, n. 21.
23 *Aṅguttara-nikāya* I 25.17 foll.; *BSR* 4.1 (1987), pp. 47–51 (see p. 58, n. 11, for the total number).
24 Lévi 1932, p. 161.19; Vaidya 1961, p. 216.6.
25 Speyer 1970, p. 11.2; Feer 1891, p. 267.
26 See Phra Dhammānanda Mahāthera (ed.), *Uppātasanti*, verses 172–186, in *Agramahāpaṇḍitānusaraṇa*, Lampang, BE 2535 [CE 1992].
27 *Therī-apadāna*, Nālandā ed., verse 471, *tato vinayadhārīnaṃ aggaṃ vaṇṇesi nāyako, bhikkhuniṃ lajjiniṃ tādiṃ kappākappavisāradaṃ*.
28 *Buddhavaṃsa* XXVI, 19 *khemā uppalavaṇṇā ca bhikkhunī aggasāvikā*; see also *Dīpavaṃsa* XVIII, 9.
29 Chit Tin & Pruitt 1988, verses 97–98.
30 *Aṅguttara-nikāya* I 88–89; Okubo 1982, pp. (21)–(22); *BSR* 5.1 (1988), pp. 47–48.
31 That is, if in the Chinese *Ekottara*, Kiu tch'eou to lo = Khujjuttarā.
32 *Aṅguttara-nikāya* I 26.16 foll.; *BSR* 4.1 (1987), pp. 54–57 (and p. 58, n. 19 for the total number).
33 Lévi 1932, p. 161.20; Vaidya 1961, p. 216.7.
34 Chit Tin & Pruitt 1988, verse 99.
35 See Waldschmidt 1980, pp. 144–148, and Akanuma 1990, p. 183.
36 Lévi & Chavannes 1916, p. 35; Przyluski 1926, p. 194.
37 There are, of course, hierarchical disparities: monks are mentioned first, followed by nuns, laymen, laywomen, and it is well-known that the order of nuns was subordinate to the order of monks. Furthermore, the lists of outstanding nuns and the verse-collections of nuns are shorter than those of the monks.
38 For the position of women in Jainism, see Deo 1956, Jaini 1991, and Dundas 1992, pp. 48–52. Deo (p. 578) remarks that "the nuns always remained subordinate to the monks not only regarding seniority but also in the execution of monastic jurisprudence. With all that, they have played a very important role in the organisation of the female Jaina laity . . .". See ibid. pp. 507–508 for some (not entirely satisfactory) remarks on "Nuns and Brāhmanism". For the status of women in Indian society in general, see Basham 1971, pp. 179–190.
39 The Jainas also use the terms *bhikkhu* and *bhikkhunī*, *sāvaka* and *sāvikā*, *upāsaka* and *upāsikā*, as well as *nigantha* and *nigganthī*. They did not have a separate set of rules for the nuns: as noted by Deo (1956, p. 473), "right from the time of the composition of the *Ācārāṅga*, different texts give a rule starting with the formula: '*Je bhikkhū bhikkhuṇī vā*', or '*Nigganthо nigganthī vā*', which shows that the rule was common both to the monks as well as to the nuns".
40 For "the influence of the teaching and preaching nuns" in China see Tsai 1994, p. 8. For early Jainism cf. Deo 1956, p. 491, who says that "women preachers are often mentioned". See also Jain 1991, pp. 352–353.
41 *Majjhima-nikāya* no. 44. For the Sarvāstivādin version see Bhikṣu Thich Minh Chau 1991, pp. 269–278; for the Mūlasarvāstivādin version see Śamathadeva, *Abhidharmakośa-upāyikāṭīkā* (Q 5595, Vol. 118, *mṅon pa'i bstan bcos tu*, 7a8–12b3).

42 *Saṃyutta-nikāya* IV 374–380. According to Akanuma (1990, p. 235) there is no Chinese parallel.

43 *Vinaya* IV 254.4, 255.4, 256.23, 285.18, 290.4, *bahussutā hoti bhāṇikā visāradā paṭṭhā dhammiṃ kathaṃ kātuṃ*. I interpret *bhāṇikā* as "eloquent", rather than as the feminine of *bhāṇaka* in the technical sense of a trained reciter of a section of the scriptures (*dīgha-bhāṇaka*, etc.), since in this sense *bhāṇaka/bhāṇikā* does not appear in the *Tipiṭaka*, but only in later literature such as paracanonical texts and *Aṭṭhakathā* (and also early inscriptions). The occurrences of *bhāṇikā* listed above seem to be the only ones in the *Tipiṭaka*, except for *mañju-bhāṇikā*, "sweet-voiced, uttering sweet words", *Jātaka* VI 422: see *PTSD* 501b, s.v. *bhāṇaka*. The term *paṭṭha* is also rare (*PTSD* 402b). The word *bhāṇikā* is not listed in the indexes to the Lokottaravādin *Bhikṣuṇī-vinaya* (Roth 1970; Nolot 1991). I reluctantly render *bahussuta/bahuśruta* as "learned", for want of a better equivalent: we should remember that the term belongs to the realm of aurality/orality, and means literally "having heard many [teachings]".

44 *Vinaya* IV 254–256.

45 *Vinaya* IV 290.7.

46 Hirakawa 1982, p. 290; Roth 1970, Nolot 1991, §207. There is no Pāli parallel to this rule.

47 Hirakawa 1982, pp. 313–314; Roth 1970, Nolot 1991, §218. The text defines *abhidharma* as *nava-vidhaḥ sūtrāntaṭ* and *abhivinaya* as *prātimokṣaḥ vistara-prabhedena*. Here, and in other epithets, terms such as *(abhi)dharma* or *(abhi)vinaya* do not refer to the written texts that we know today, but to earlier oral transmissions and explications of the Buddha's teachings and the monastic guidelines. The Pāli parallel (*pācittiya* 68) does not give the ten qualifications, or mention *abhidharma* and *abhivinaya* (but the ability to train in *abhidhamma* and *abhivinaya* are among the five qualities that a monk should possess in order to ordain another: *Vinaya* I 64.penult.) For the two terms see Watanabe 1996, pp. 25–36.

48 Cowell & Neil 1987, p. 493.8, 15. The same passage occurs in the *Vinaya-vibhaṅga* and *Vinaya-samuccaya* with the variant **dvīpiṭā vā tripiṭā vā: Vinaya-vibhaṅga*, Q1032, Vol 43, *'dul ba ñe*, 65b1, 7 and *Vinaya-samuccaya*, Q5607, Vol. 121, *'dul 'grel mu*, 104a7, b6, *dge sloṅ ma rnams ni sde snod gñis pa daṅ, sde snod gsum pa chos sgrog pa, rigs pa daṅ, grol ba'i spobs pa can dag*. (The few minor variants in the Tibetan need not trouble us here.) For *yuktamuktapratibhāṇa* cf. Braarvig 1985, pp. 18 and 25, nn. 3, 4.

49 *Aṅguttara-nikāya* I 25.22, *etad aggaṃ bhikkhave mama sāvikānaṃ bhikkhunīnaṃ dhammakathikānaṃ yad idaṃ dhammadinnā*. Cf. *BSR* 4.1 (1987), p. 48.

50 *Aṅguttara-nikāya* I 25.21, *etad aggaṃ bhikkhave mama sāvikānaṃ bhikkhunīnaṃ vinayadharānaṃ yad idaṃ paṭācārā*. Cf. *BSR* 4.1 (1987), p. 47. Paṭācārā's initial aspiration in a previous life is related in her *apadāna: Therī-apadāna*, Nālandā ed., verses 468–511, especially verses 471 (for which see n. 27 above) and 506. For a summary of the *apadāna* see Cutler 1994, pp. 9–10.

51 *Bhaiṣajyavastu*, in Dutt 1984, Vol. III, pt. 1, p. 22.13, *eṣāgrā me bhikṣavo bhikṣuṇīnāṃ mama śrāvikāṇāṃ sūtrāntavibhāgakartṛīṇāṃ yad uta kacaṃgalā bhikṣuṇī*; Tibetan translation Q1030, Vol. 41, *'dul ba ge*, 121b8; *Avadānaśataka* in Speyer 1970, p. 43.8 = Feer 1891, p. 291. See also the *Tsa-pao-tsang-ching* (Taisho 203), in Willemen 1994, p. 21, "Among *bhikṣuṇī*-s [Kacaṃgalā] had the best understanding of the sutras".

52 Speyer 1970, pp. 22.4, 50.9, respectively; Feer 1891, pp. 277, 295, respectively. For the skills implied by *bahussuta* and *sutadhara* see *Majjhima-nikāya* I 213.1.

53 *Aṅguttara-nikāya* I 25.19, *etad aggaṃ bhikkhave mama sāvikānaṃ bhikkhunīnaṃ ṃahāpaññānaṃ yad idaṃ khemā*. Cf. *BSR* 4.1 (1987), p. 47.

54 *Dīpavaṃsa* XVIII, 7–10.
55 *Dīpavaṃsa* XVIII, 11–43: the refrain runs (with variants) *vinayaṃ tāva vācesuṃ piṭakaṃ anurādhasavhaye, nikāye pañca vācesuṃ satta c' eva pakaraṇe*.
56 Geiger 1953 II, p. x, gives regnal dates CE 16–38 for Kuṭakaṇṇatissa, 38–66 for Bhātikābhaya.
57 *Dīpavaṃsa* XVIII, 44 *idāni atthi aññāyo therikā majjhimā navā, vibhajjavādī vinayadharā sāsane paveṇipālakā, bahussutā sīlasampannā obhāsenti mahiṃ imaṃ*.
58 *Dīpavaṃsa* XIX, 12.
59 Marshall & Foucher 1983, Vol. I, §§304, 305.
60 Sharma 1984, p. 184, notes 46 and 49. For *trepiṭikā* (masc. *trepiṭikā*) see Damsteegt 1978, pp. 179 and 248 (where he notes that the feminine *trepiṭikā* is not in any of the dictionaries that he consulted).
61 Woodward 1948, p. viii.
62 *Aṅguttara-nikāya* I 26.19; *BSR* 4.1 (1987), p. 55. Note that the *Sobhana-sutta* (see n. 10 above) includes "laywoman" among those who adorn the order: *upāsikā bhikkhave viyattā vinītā visāradā bahussutā dhammadharā dhammānudhamma-paṭipannā saṅghaṃ sobheti*.
63 For some aspects of the feminine in Mahāyāna literature, see Dayal 1932, pp. 223–224 and Paul 1979.
64 See e.g. the *Vajracchedikā* in Conze 1974, §§8, 14h, 19, 28, 30a, 32a, and Conze's remarks on *kulaputra*, pp. 103–104. It is interesting that several of the similes of the *Vajraccliedikā* begin with "whatever woman or man" (*yaś ca khalu punaḥ subluūte strī vā puruṣo vā*): see §§13e, 15a, and also 11.
65 See Ejima et al. 1985, pp. 280–281, s.v. *kula-duhitr, kula-putra. kula-duhitr* is "always accompanied with (*sic*) *kulaputra*"; the latter occurs alone, and more frequently.
66 Tsukamoto 1985, Vol. II, pp. 1094–1095; Waldschmidt 1986, §41.5, 10; *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya* IV 4ab (Pradhan 1975, p. 196.15); IV 117ab (Pradhan 270.11): for a fuller citation see *Abhidharmakośa-vyākhyā* ad IV 4ab (Dwarikadas 1971, pp. 580–582).
67 For *kula-putta* see *PTC* 63b, which gives only 3 references for *kula-dhītā* (63a), to *Vinaya* II 10 and *Mahāniddesa* 229, 392. In none of these references is *kula-dhītā* paired with *kula-putta*. Where the Sarvāstivādin **Gautamī-sūtra* has "believing son or daughter of good family", the Pāli counterpart (*Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga, Majjhima-nikāya* III 254–255) has no equivalent. Where the (Mūla)Sarvāstivādin *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* has both *kula-putra* and *kula-duhitṛ*, the Pāli *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* has only *kula-putta*. In both Pāli and Sanskrit, *kula-putta/kula-putra* (and, in the latter, *kula-duhitṛ*) is regularly prefixed by "faithful, believing" (*saddha, śrāddha*), and is frequently used in connection with the creation of merit (*puṇya*). A comprehensive study of the usage and contexts of *kula-putra/kuladuhitṛ* in Theravādin, (Mūla)Sarvāstivādin, and Mahāyāna literature is a desideratum.
68 Since the passages referred to may easily be found at the beginning of any edition or translation of the texts in question, I do not give any references.
69 I would not be surprised if in some cases different recensions or translations of the same sūtra give different *nidāna*-s.
70 Vaidya 1960, pp. 148–153, translated in Paul 1979, pp. 94–105 (from Sanskrit: abbr.), and Cleary 1987 pp. 141–146 (from Chinese).
71 Vaidya 1960, pp. 236. 10 foll.
72 Nos. 8, 14, 20, 46: see table in Vaidya, pp. xxiv–xxix. For translations from Sanskrit of Nos. 8 and 14 see Pauly 1979, pp. 137–144, 144–155; for translations from Chinese see Cleary 1987, pp. 84–90 (No. 8), 107–111 (No. 14), 127–132 (No. 20), 318–319 (No. 46).

73 Nos. 11, 26, 41, and 42 in Vaidya's table. For a translation of No. 26 from Sanskrit see Pauly 1979, pp. 155–162. For translations of Nos. 11, 26, 41, and 42 from Chinese see Cleary 1987, pp. 98–102, 146–149, 273–305, 305–315. No. 51 (Cleary pp. 320–328) has a gendered pair: a young man (*dāraka*) and a young woman (*dārikā*).

74 Gómez 1996, vow 35, pp. 74 (from Sanskrit) and 170 (from Chinese) for the former; Dantinne 1983, pp. 97–98 (vow 21), 141–142 (note x), 194–197, 223–224 (note w) for the latter.

75 Watson 1993, pp. 191–192. Needless to say, as Buddhas the former nuns will be males.

76 *dāyikānaṃ aggā, Aṅguttara-nikāya* I 26.18. For Visākhā see Horner 1930, pp. 345–361; *DPPN* II 900–904; Falk 1990.

77 e.g. *Majjhima-nikāya* III 104.2, *ekam samayaṃ bhagavā sāvatthiyaṃ viharati pubbārāme migāramātu pāsāde.*

78 For patronage during the period in question, see Thapar 1992, Dehejia 1992, Willis 1992. For the vocabulary of donation in early inscriptions, see Bhattacharya 1987.

79 See, for a start, Gokhale 1991, pp. 13–15 and Gregory Schopen, "Filial Piety and the Monk in the Practice of Indian Buddhism: A Question of 'Sinicization' Viewed from the Other Side", in Schopen 1997, Chap. III.

80 Schopen 1988–89, p. 164.

81 See Skilling 1993–94, pp. 34–35.

82 Marshall & Foucher 1983, Vol. I, p. 297. For women as patrons, see Thapar 1992, pp. 28–29, Gokhale 1991, pp. 14–15, and Willis 1992.

83 Sarma & Rao 1993, p. 90.

84 For references see Chaudhury 1982, pp. 229–232.

85 Paranavitana 1970, pp. cv–cvi, cxvii. Paranavitana describes *śamaṇi* as "the recognized form of referring to a nun", and notes that "the equivalents of the terms *bhikkhu* and *bhikkhunī* have not been applied to Buddhist monks and nuns" in the early inscriptions.

86 For examples of participation of nuns, see Schopen 1988–89, pp. 159–163; Skilling 1993–94, pp. 31–32.

87 Lüders 1961, §150.

88 Marshall & Foucher 1983, Vol. I, §§828–830.

89 Czuma & Morris 1985, §117.

90 See e.g. Sharma 1984, figs. 83–86, 89–91. A small child is present in fig. 90.

91 See e.g. Rosenfield 1967, figs. 33, 104. Similar scenes are depicted on the bases of Jaina images: see e.g. Huntington & Huntington 1985, fig. 8.44.

92 Monks are also shown, in homage to a seated bodhisattva, on the base of a standing Gandhāran bodhisattva in Czuma & Morris 1985, §115

93 See Zwalf 1996, Vol. I, p. 41, "Seats and bases". Zwalf remarks that "although an iconographic programme often seems present, systematic relationships between an image and the carving on its base remain to be established in detail".

94 As far as I have noticed, monastics are not depicted in the earliest reliefs of Bhārhut and Sāñcī, whether in narrative or homage scenes. For two monks worshipping a *dharma-cakra* on a tympanum described as from the 1st century CE see Czuma & Morris 1985, §7.

95 Czuma & Morris 1985, §15.

96 The role of women as donors remains strong today (except that the order of nuns is no more): an observer at a temple ceremony in Siam will be struck by the fact that the assembly consists largely of women, who present offerings of food and requisites to the monks. On special occasions such as birthdays, weddings, or funerals,

the whole (extended) family usually participates in merit-making. Just as the components of the ancient *caitya*-s were labelled by the donors, so the components and furniture — a *kuṭi*, a gate, a bench, an electric fan — of the modern monastery bear the names of the donor(s) and of those to whom the merit is dedicated.

97 Male-female couples flanking *caitya*-s are a frequent theme in Sāñcī reliefs, and men and women are shown worshipping at tree or footprint shrines. See also the worshipping couples on the door-jambs in Czuma & Morris 1985, §11, and the giant couples at Kārle (Huntington & Huntington 1985, figs. 9.3, 9.4) and Kaṇheri (ibid, fig. 9.20).

98 *Devatā*-s can be male or female, but in the *Devatā-saṃyutta* they are all male. *devadhītā* is rare in Pāli: see *PTSD* 330a (not in *PTC*).

99 For a Sanskrit Sarvāstivādin version from Central Asia see Waldschmidt 1932; for a Mūlasarvāstivādin version in Tibetan translation see Skilling 1994b, *Mahāsūtra* 8. Both Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin versions bear the title *Mahāsamāja-sūtra*. For the Theravādin version, the Pāli *Mahāsamaya-sutta*, see *Dīgha-nikāya* 20; in this version there are fewer female deities.

100 These are listed in six sets of verses, each of which names ten groups of deities: Skilling 1994b, *Mahāsūtra* 8, §§20–26. The deities catalogued in §§20, 22, 23, and 24 are all female. Fa-t'ien's Chinese translation of the *Mahāsamāja* describes the deities of § 22 as "Göttermädchen", of §§23 and 24 as "Yakṣamädchen": see Waldschmidt 1932, pp. 184–188.

101 Skilling 1994b, *Mahāsūtra* 8, § 28.

102 One version of her story is related in the *Tsa-pao-tsang-ching*: see Willemen 1994, §106. For further remarks and references see Zwalf 1996, Vol. I, pp. 44 and 48, n. 125.

103 I use here the title as given in the Mūlasarvāstivādin version. In the Central Asian Sanskrit version the title is *Āṭānāṭika*, in Pāli (*Dīgha-nikāya* 32) it is *Āṭānāṭiya*.

104 Skilling 1994b, *Mahāsūtra* 9, §3.7: for other beings see §§4.2, 5.7, 6.2, 7.7, 8.2, 9.7, 10.2. Pāli §III.2 is less scrupulous. I do not know if it would be safe to conclude that the (Mūla) Sarvāstivādin editors were especially gender-sensitive, since the context — protective invocation — requires comprehensiveness.

105 See Skilling 1992, p. 147.

106 See Skilling 1992, pp. 133–134. For an edition, translation, and study of a related Uighur text, see Radloff & von Staël-Holstein 1910; for the Sanskrit version, the *Diśāsauvāstika-sūtra*, see *SHT* (I) 660, (IV) (Erg.) 660, and Wille 1996, pp. 387–388.

107 Shackleton Bailey 1951, pp. 119, 205.

108 See Bongard-Levin et al. 1996, pp. 82–87 (text), 96–101 (translation).

109 See Lévi 1905, pp. 264–268.

110 For references see Skilling 1992, p. 155.

111 Or 21, counting the "young maiden" (*dārikā*: see above, n. 73). A paper on this subject was announced at the 35th International Congress of Asian and North African Studies (Budapest, 7–12 July, 1997): Yuko Ijiri (Leiden), "The Role of Female Kalyāṇa-Mitras in the Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra".

112 Vaidya 1960, table, nos. 31–40, 43.

113 Vaidya 1960, p. 339.14 foll.; Cleary 1987, pp. 306–307.

114 See Roth 1986 for a study of the motif of a woman bending down the branch of a tree, the *śālabhañjikā* pose.

115 Skilling 1994b, *Mahāsūtra* 9, §2.33–36.

116 E.g. stories no. 5, 41, 60–62.

117 Barua & Sinha 1926, pp. 48–52. Padumāvati is placed in the northern quarter in the *Āśīrvāda* texts (see e.g. Radloff & von Staël-Holstein, table, pp. 100–101). In the *Āṭānāṭiya* (Skilling 1994b, *Mahāsūtra* 9, §2.43) she is a consort of Kuvera, guardian of the north (so the Sanskrit and the Tibetan: the Pāli is different).

118 Barua & Sinha 1926, pp. 72–78.
119 For an inscribed Gandhāran Śrī see Zwalf 1996, §95.
120 See Zwalf 1996, Vol. II, fig. 92; Czuma & Morris 1985, §§74, 75, 80; Huntington & Huntington 1985, pl. 5 and figs. 8.26, 8.27. For a later image from Ratnagiri see Snellgrove 1987, pl. 21a.
121 It strikes me that many modern works attempt to rationalize the role of deities, and to limit the discussion to cosmology (treated as a carry-over from earlier beliefs) — the levels of rebirth as determined by karma and meditation — with a grudging recognition of the role of gods (Śakra, certain Brahmā-s) as interlocutors (treated as symbolic). On gods in (early Theravādin) Buddhism see Marasinghe 1974, *EB* IV 412–418, s.v. *deva*, and Wagle 1985; (in general) Lamotte 1976, pp. 759–765. For deities in Gandhāra see Zwalf 1996, Vol. I, pp. 43–44. For goddesses in Jainism see Dundas 1992, pp. 181–183. For female deities from Hindu contexts, see Daniélou 1964 (especially part 4) and Kinsley 1988. (On the Hindu/Buddhist distinction, Sylvain Lévi's remarks with reference to Nepal at the beginning of this century may be fairly applied to the India of the centuries after the Buddha: "A rigid classification which simplistically divided divinities up under the headings, Buddhism, Śaivism, and Vaiṣṇavism, would be a pure nonsense; under different names, and at different levels, the same gods are for the most part common to different confessions [*églises*]" [*Le Népal, Étude historique d'un royaume hindou*, Vol. I, Paris, 1905, repr. New Delhi, 1991, p. 319, as rendered in Gellner 1992, p. 76]).
122 For examples of colonial conceptions of Buddhism, see Scott 1994 and Almond 1988.
123 For further details see Skilling 1993–94.
124 See e.g. Hirakawa 1982, p. 337, or Theravādin *bhikkhu pācittiya* no. 27.
125 See above, references to *Dīpavaṃsa*. As a boy Kumārajīva travelled from Kucha to India and back with his mother, who had become a nun: Watson 1993, p. xxv. In 429 and 433, nuns from Sri Lanka travelled by sea to China, where they assisted in the establishment of the nun's ordination lineage: see Tsai 1994, pp. 53–54.
126 Cf. Snellgrove 1987, pp. 150–152.
127 Dundas 1992, p. 49.
128 The article was originally published (with numbers of misprints) in Pathompong Bodhiprasiddhinand (ed.), *Pāli and Sanskrit Studies: Mahāmakut Centenary Commemorative Volume and Felicitation Volume presented to H.H. The Supreme Patriarch on the Occasion of his 80th Birthday*, Mahāmakuṭa Rājavidyālaya Foundation, Bangkok, BE 2536 (1993), pp. 208–251.

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